



THE OMNIBUS BOOK

FIRST JOURNEY





# OMNIBUS BOOK

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DEAN MAYER

CLEMENT MANN

H. M. THOMAS

EDWARD THOMAS

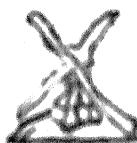
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The omnibus book is edited by  
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## PREFACE

**T**HERE have been other Omnibus volumes, 'buses poetical, historical, dramatical, fictional,'buses with one large passenger (a Hardy or a Stevenson), 'buses with a hundred little ones, and those of so many different nationalities that one imagines the conductor must sell more tickets to the Tower of Babel than to anywhere else, except possibly Geneva.

But has there ever been a 'bus so scarlet, gay and beautiful as this of ours ? Sir, Madam, this is a holiday 'bus, an enchanted truant of a 'bus that runs for ever and ever away from business into pleasure. The Company that runs it has planned its route not for instruction nor for betterment, but only to delight you, and though you may say that you and your neighbour and his neighbour would all face different ways if you were setting out to take your pleasure by reading, yet we believe that here is a vehicle that will take all three of you to your journey's end.

One word of warning : look out for bumps. My 'bus routes run smooth and straight from star point to terminus. Most books pass sedately an the conventional order of numerals from page one to page a thousand and one—or wherever it is that the

## PREFACE

binding stops them. But not our Bus—indeed Book. All goes smoothly enough until *Greenery Street* (that "street in Paradise," as Mr. Punch calls it) comes to an end on page 307. Now any ordinary book would plod heavily on to page 308, but we, with a Pegasus-like flight, pass over a couple of blanks and the mystic letter B, and next touch numerical ground on page 2 of Miss Clemence Dane's *Legend*. Straight on till you come to 194, and then, by another miraculous twist, the bus will double in its tracks and set you down at 80 for all the world as if it were playing at Snakes and Ladders. (You'll find a snake hereabouts, in Mr. Tomlinson's country.) At 87 you jump a fifty-page chasm to 137; at 141 you bounce back to 7 again. And so on, and so forth. We shall not attempt to explain or excuse it, for it is only by juggling so with the Magic of Numbers that we are able to drive you so far for the small fare of eight shillings and sixpence. Therefore the Company reserves the right to eject forthwith any passenger so timid that he cannot leap these numerical gulls, and for the rest, Madam, Sir, you are made free of the

- 1 Short Story,
- 1 Long-short Story,
- 2 Essays,
- 3 Novels,
- 5 Sketches and

9 Poems to which our scarlet  
Omnibus is even now waiting to convey you.

## THE CONDUCTOR

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GREENERY STREET

A Novel

by

DENIS MACKAIL

~~every~~ ~~young~~ ~~married~~ couple begins life in Greenery Street. It wouldn't even be true to say that every house in Greenery Street contains a young married couple. Yet both these statements have frequently been made; and so accurately do they describe the spirit of the place, that no one has ever troubled to contradict them. We certainly shouldn't dream of contradicting them ourselves.

The street consists of thirty-six narrow little houses—all, at a first glance, exactly the same; and a mental picture of it generally includes a large pantchnicon van, backed against the pavement and collecting or discharging household goods. For though every young married couple that comes to Greenery Street does so with the intention of staying there for life, there are few streets where in actual fact the population is more constantly changing. And the first sign of this change is in almost every case the same. It is seen in the arrival of a brand-new perambulator.

After this—little as each individual couple in turn suspects it—the hour of their departure is interminably entered in the Book of Fate. A battle is at that moment joined which can have but one ending, and though some tenants will hang on desperately—even to the point where the perambulator is supplemented by a mail-cart—sooner or later they will have to let go. The little house, in which they had once vaguely thought to end their days, turns against them. It is inevitable in its demand for newly-married couples, but it absolutely declines to countenance additions to their family. Its passage-hall becomes narrower, its stairs become steeper; its accommodation—which had originally included an entire room devoted to nothing but surplus wedding-presents—shrinks almost visibly. "Darling," says the young wife and mother presently, "I know you won't mind, but we're getting so

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terribly cramped for space that I told Nurse she could keep her trunk in your dressing-room."

The young husband and father bows before the inevitable; but soon the trunk is joined by the sewing-machine. Then grandmamma generously but thoughtlessly presents the nursery with a rocking-horse; and to make room for it the sewing-machine is joined by the linen-cupboard—which, as is pointed out, ought really to be kept in the basement, only they've hardly got room to turn round there as it is.

Then there is illness. Oh, nothing serious; but with this constant shrinkage it is enough to drive the young husband out for three nights to his club. And when he returns, it is to admit defeat. "I'm afraid you're right," he says. "I don't know where on earth the money's to come from, but we shall have to leave Greenery Street." "Darling," says the young wife, who for months now has been siding with the little house in its wish to expel them; "it's dreadfully sad in a way, but I don't see what else we can do."

There is a short silence here, while with malicious cruelty the little house seems momentarily to expand to its original proportions—taunting them with that they have lost; but with the heavy tread of Nurse on the stairs the illusion vanishes. "I shall never be as fond of another house as I am of this," says Mrs. Younghusband with a sigh. Mr. Younghusband knocks out his pipe. "It can't be helped," he answers abruptly. "It's no good pretending we haven't all been infernally uncomfortable for months."

And so it is settled. Within a week the agent's notice-board has been lashed to the area railings; a week more and it is down again. Presently yet another pantechnicon van backs ponderously against the kerb, and a smell of hessian floats up the stairs. Ghostly outlines of the pictures and furniture are revealed on the white walls, as the house is swiftly stripped. The child or children went to grandmamma's several days ago, and the last person to leave the empty rooms is Mr. Younghusband himself. In one hand he holds the three latchkeys which he must now hand over

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to the agents. In the other he grasps a wilder burier whose in the family cat is wretchedly revolving on its own axis. He had meant to pay a final visit to all the rooms by himself—ostensibly to discover if anything had been overlooked, but at the last moment—though he is nearly thirty now, and the father of a family—he realises that it can't be avoided. For all the happy memories which the little house has given, it has already become his enemy. He knows that, and yet he can never hate it in return. Neither, though, can he allow it to see how much, how terribly he minds.

And so, his feet echoing on the empty boards, he hurries quickly away. For the last time he catches the round-trip on the front-door and slams it behind him. Then, without turning his head, he runs down the three steps and across the pavement into the waiting taxi.

“I want you to go first to Gibbons and Duke—you know, the house-agents—and then——”

But he cannot, at this supreme moment, bring himself to utter the name of his new and loathed editor. Fortunately the driver seems content with the directions which he has already received. He clammers aboard, wireless at his machinery, and away they go—the cat meowing gaily from its prison.

Good-bye, Greenery Street. To-morrow morning another young married or about-to-be-married couple will have assumed possession of those latchkeys, and will be confounding yet one more builder over the faithless little house.

## II

### I

IT was in April—though on a day which, but for the temperature, was more like the May of a poet's imagination—that Felicity Hamilton and Ian Foster first came wandering into Greenery Street. Felicity's hands were not only in her gloves, but also in her muff, so that it is difficult to say why one should be so certain that she was wearing an engagement ring. Perhaps, after all, one only deduced its presence by the look in her eyes, or even more indirectly by the look in Ian's. Perhaps—but in any case there it was, and there it had been for very nearly a fortnight.

In the opinion of both contracting parties they had, however, been engaged for a great deal longer than this; and—though no one else knew it—Felicity had slept with this same ring on her finger every night since the twenty-third of January. Since they had met each other for the first time on the eleventh of the same month, it was obvious—as they pointed out—how very well they must know their own minds. And yet there had been an alternative explanation to which, for nearly ten weeks, Felicity's parents had persisted in clinging. “It is impossible,” they had declared, “that you can pretend to know anything about him.” And then, illogically and foolishly, they had issued an Order in Council to the general effect that never the twain should meet.

At this stage Felicity had very sensibly wept, and the Order in Council was immediately amended.

“You may write to each other,” it now read; “and if after six months you are still in the same frame of mind, then—well, we'll see about that when the time comes.” The authorities clearly considered that in six months the whole affair would have passed into oblivion, and were conceivably influenced in this belief by their younger daughter's well-known aversion to taking up her pen. They totally failed to appreciate the difference between writing to

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one's father and mother and writing to Ian. And, incredible as it may sound—they entirely overlooked the existence of the telephone.

Felicity's activities during the ensuing weeks became, accordingly, monotonous in the extreme. She received three letters from Ian every day, and never replied with less than two, while such time as could be spared from the heavy correspondence was almost wholly spent in the telephone cupboard under the front stairs. Moreover, by a strange chain of coincidences, she had—despite the embargo—met Ian at no less than seven public functions (six dances and one dinner-party) within the first month. The result of all this was that they both became more convinced than ever that, whatever their ignorance on other matters, they did at least and unmistakably know their own minds. Notwithstanding all temptation, though, the letter of the law remained intact.

The nearest they had ever come to breaking it had been on the occasion of the one dinner-party. This, admittedly, had been a put-up job; but since it had involved collusion with a member of Felicity's own family, it might have been difficult to secure a conviction. "It was frightful fun," Felicity had said afterwards, "but I'm afraid we *mustn't* do it again. You see, it wouldn't really be fair on Daphne." Ian had instantly agreed. "On no account, he said, must they do anything that wasn't absolutely fair.

It *had* been frightful fun, though. Daphne—~~whose~~ <sup>was</sup> officially known as Mrs. Bruce Lennox, and was also Felicity's elder sister—had behaved like a perfect brick. Although Bruce had been down in the country on business, she had instantly procured another man to make a fourth; and from the very moment that dinner was over she and this stop-gap had disappeared as utterly as though they had been spirited into another world—leaving the entire front and back drawing-rooms to the remaining two guests.

During their prolonged absence Ian and Felicity had become still more extravagantly certain that they knew their own minds. And as they had also driven back as far as the

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corner of Felicity's street in the same taxi, it was really remarkably honourable of them to decide, as they did, that the evening must not be repeated. If they were at all influenced by the fact that three of the six dances were taking place during the following week, this should not be set against their essential virtue or their unselfish consideration for Mrs. Bruce Lennox.

It was at these dances—though they had no idea of it at the time—that Felicity's mother had begun to weaken. There seems to be no fixed rule about chaperons in these days; and Mrs. Hamilton had been happy enough, during Felicity's first season, to send her off alone—with the cab-fare tied in the corner of her pocket-handkerchief—to parties where the general supervision of morals was left to such matrons as cared to turn out for an evening's Bridge accompanied by the distant sound of dance music. Sometimes one telephoned beforehand, and said: “*Would* you mind keeping an eye on my girl at the Ffoulkeses' this evening? Thank you *so* much.” Oftener one left things to chance, with equally negligible results.

But it had been on such an unchaperoned occasion that Felicity had first met Ian; and though it were hard to say how a mother's presence could have prevented this meeting, Mrs. Hamilton had yet—since then—shown an inclination to return to the old tradition. The suppers were not, it was true, what they had been in her own young days, or even when she had gone out night after night with Daphne; the music—there was no doubt of it—was intolerable; and yet she had certainly not found that these evenings had bored her. It was something, also, to obtain ocular evidence that one's second daughter was, as her sister had been before her, the prettiest girl in the room. All the other veterans had said this to Mrs. Hamilton, and though she had never failed to deny it (“Of course Felicity hasn't got your niece's colouring,” and so on), she knew perfectly well that it was true.

On the second night of her reappearance as a chaperon she had noticed Felicity dancing with a young man whose

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looks—and more particularly what she described as his “cleanliness”—had made a very favourable impression on her.

“Who,” she asked the sharer of her sofa, “is that clean young man?”

“With Felicity?”

“Yes.”

“That’s Ian Foster.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Hamilton. She hoisted her lorgnettes and peered at Ian through them. He looked cleaner than ever.

Of course it was monstrous of Felicity to dance with him like this after all that had been said at home. How was it, then, that it was equally monstrous of her not to have introduced him to her mother? In the end it was the second point which Mrs. Hamilton took up as she drove away from the Mastertons’ with a sleepy, silent Felicity sharing the back seat of the family car.

“He kept on asking me to, mummie,” said Felicity, “but it seemed so awkward.” And then, in quick self-defence: “But I couldn’t pretend I didn’t know him, could I?”

Mrs. Hamilton left this problem in social etiquette unanswered.

“You couldn’t help liking him if you knew him, though,” Felicity added.

The immediate result of it all was that when Mrs. Hamilton got home—at two o’clock in the morning—she woke her husband up, only to find that she had forgotten (or else had never known) what she was going to say. She had a strong feeling that it was his duty, without her disclosing anything that had happened, to offer fresh moral support in the stand that was being made against the clean young man. But how was poor old Humphrey to guess this?

“For heaven’s sake turn the light out,” was his only view of the matter. “How do you think I’m ever going to get to sleep again?” And then, still looking profoundly annoyed, he had instantly relapsed into complete unconsciousness.

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Mrs. Hamilton continued to experience a vague sensation of uncertainty and indecision for several days, and then—though without great hopes that any real good would come of it—she had driven across the Park to the mammoth mansion where her mother, Lady Angmering, still kept the flag of the nineteenth century nailed firmly to the mast. About sixty years ago, when Lady Angmering was a girl, it was the custom for persons riding in broughams or barouches to lean forward whenever the vehicle stopped in traffic, so as to escape the possibility of injury from the pole of the carriage immediately behind. And on the rare occasions now when she left the mammoth mansion, Lady Angmering still observed the same precaution. For though carriage-poles might have vanished from the streets of London, that was no reason—as she saw it—for abandoning a habit which had served her so well in the past.

Notwithstanding this and other historical survivals which made her daughter uncomfortable and her grandchildren laugh, there had never yet been any question but that Lady Angmering had decidedly got her wits about her. And whether or no she provided the moral support for which Mrs. Hamilton was still searching, one might be certain that she would counsel nothing revolutionary or rash. At this particular stage such counsel was, Mrs. Hamilton felt, exactly what she needed.

And so, when she had climbed the mammoth staircase to the drawing-room, and had kissed her mother, and had listened to the latest story about Child, the butler—part of a vivid saga which had continued without intermission from the Victorian era—and when she had also given a full account of how she had occupied her time since her last visit, with sundry cross-references to how all the people whom she had met had occupied *their* time—when, we repeat, she had completed these necessary but exhausting preliminaries, Mrs. Hamilton had ultimately added :

“ But what I really wanted to talk to you about was Felicity.”

“ Heh ? ” said Lady Angmering. “ Dear little Felicity.”

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(She was the only member of the family who didn't pronounce it " Flissty.") " Why does she never come and see me ? Why didn't you bring her with you ? "

Mrs. Hamilton explained first that Felicity had lunched with her grandmother last week (" So she did. Dear child, how fresh she was looking, too "), and secondly that she particularly hadn't brought her to-day because she wished to discuss what she had been doing.

" Heh ? " repeated Lady Angmering at this point. " Dear little Felicity. She ought to get married, you know. Like dear Daphne."

" How *like* mother to say that, " thought Mrs. Hamilton, with growing impatience. And yet, after all, it had brought them appreciably nearer the goal. Not exactly the kind of short cut which she would have chosen, but still . . . .

" That's just what I came to see you about, mother. Felicity *is* talking of getting married."

" And what does Humphrey say ? Isn't he delighted ? Heh ? "

What a mistake it had been to mention it at all. Mrs. Hamilton began to raise her voice, just as if her mother were deaf—though as a matter of fact she knew quite well that Lady Angmering's hearing was as good as her own.

" Humphrey hasn't met the young man, " she explained. " He thinks he ought to have spoken to him first."

" Tch, " said Lady Angmering. " That's not the way to deal with it. I should have thought Humphrey would have had more sense."

Almost to her surprise, Mrs. Hamilton found herself inwardly in agreement. But she reminded herself of her duty, and went on.

" They're both so young, " she suggested.

" All the better, " said Lady Angmering. " But who is the young man ? Why doesn't Felicity bring him to see me ? "

For all the calm of this colossal, dimly-lighted drawing-room, for all the serenity of her mother's manner, Mrs. Hamilton felt herself getting flustered.

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"His name is Foster," she said. "And Felicity met him at a dance. But Humphrey says—"

"Tch," interrupted Lady Angmering again. "Never mind what Humphrey says. Is he a *nice* young man? Is he good enough for Felicity? Has he got any money—or any prospects?"

"I—well, Humphrey—that is—well, really, I hardly know," is the closest transcription which we can give of Mrs. Hamilton's answer. She wished that her voice didn't sound so much as if she were on the defensive.

"Tch," said Lady Angmering for the third time. And then she had switched the conversation to other matters, and had kept it there—firmly and skilfully—for nearly half an hour. Only when she had rung the bell for Child to show Mrs. Hamilton down to the car, did she return to the subject of her grand-daughter.

"Will you give Felicity a message?" she said abruptly.

"Of course, mamma."

"I'd like her to know that when she marries—I mean, naturally, with everyone's approval—I have decided to give her my pearls."

There was no alternative but to express the utmost gratitude on her daughter's behalf. And yet—despite the proviso which had accompanied this offer—Mrs. Hamilton left the mammoth mansion, and not for the first time, with an unwelcome feeling that she had in some way been outwitted.

In the car she had decided that the message must be submitted to her husband's analysis and examination before it was definitely passed on. But Humphrey had been even more like Humphrey than Lady Angmering had been like Lady Angmering.

He walked round and round his wife's sitting-room, picking up knick-knacks and putting them down again, staring fixedly at familiar objects as though he had never seen them before, and periodically twisting his mouth to one side or the other. This much accomplished, he had remarked: "Yes, yes. I dare say"—which it was impossible to regard as

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throwing any real light on the affair—and then, with a sudden air of decision, he had asked for a thermometer, taken his own temperature, and announced that he was going to bed.

The exasperating and almost incredible part of it was that he really had got influenza. He made no attempt to hide the thermometer, and in less than two hours its evidence had been confirmed by the family doctor. It might seem inconceivable that anyone should bring this disease on himself by sheer will-power; and yet could one say that anything was inconceivable where Humphrey Hamilton was faced with the danger of having to make up his own mind? From different angles his wife and his unmarried daughter viewed his illness with the deepest suspicion—but there was no getting away from the genuineness of his symptoms. They turned to and nursed him devotedly; they fed him with grapes, they read aloud to him until they were hoarse, they cancelled their engagements and waited on him like slaves. Nevertheless, as they sat at opposite ends of the dining-room table, it was noticeable that they avoided all discussion of the patient's progress. It almost looked as if they were afraid that they might say something which they would afterwards regret.

In the end, however, when he had toyed with various complications and rejected them as apparently involving more trouble than they were worth, the patient was forced to begin recovering. It was true that he did this as slowly as he could, and that the mention of anything suggesting either pearls or engagements produced an immediate relapse, but for all that he was undoubtedly making headway. Presently he was down in his study again, and only waiting for a change in the weather to go out for a drive.

And yet, even if old Humphrey had managed to gain nearly six weeks by his dastardly tactics, he had by the same means definitely lost his principal ally in the battle of Felicity's marriage. Mrs. Hamilton did not exactly put it in that way, but in this particular contest she was no longer going to be led by a general whose methods were

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so dishonourably underhand. One might believe in coincidences up to a point, but in the thirty odd years of her married life she had learnt more about her husband's attacks of influenza than any doctor was ever likely to discover. He had had one when she had first wanted to move into a bigger house; another when she had asked him to buy her a car; yet another when she was making arrangements to give a coming-out dance for Daphne. She had nursed him through these and others; she would, of course, nurse him through as many more as he cared to develop; but it must be clearly understood that in future an attack of influenza was an attack of influenza and nothing more. Never again (so she secretly declared) would she admit it as a contribution to any argument in which she and Humphrey might become involved.

That she had reached this decision more than once before, only to abandon it before the startling reality of her husband's temperature-chart, should make no difference this time. The very second that he was well enough he had got to face the Foster problem, and face it like a man. We gather that at this point—although she was far from realising it—she had definitely swung (or been driven) round to Felicity's side.

As a matter of actual fact, though, it was old Humphrey himself who—going a step too far at last—brought matters to a head. Daphne had come to tea that afternoon, and she and her mother were in Mrs. Hamilton's sitting-room when Felicity suddenly burst in with indignation radiating from her like a shower of electric sparks.

“It's too monstrous!” she said, in a shaking voice. “It's unspeakable!”

“What is, darling?” asked Daphne from the depths of her arm-chair.

Felicity's eyes flashed.

“I dare say I did listen at the door,” she admitted; “though it was open in any case. But do you know what father's doing now?”

Mrs. Hamilton's hands fluttered uncomfortably. Daphne's

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lazily-inquiring smile supplied the requisite "No. What?"

"He's asking old Plowden"—(Old Plowden was the aforementioned family doctor)—"to send him off to the South of France. He knows perfectly well it's quite unnecessary, and what's more old Plowden told him to straight out, but—but"—here her voice began to tremble again—"he just doesn't want ever to have to settle anything about—about—"

Daphne, who if she were cat-like in her laziness was no less cat-like in the swift suddenness of her movements, was on her feet in a flash.

"That's all right," she said. "He can go if he likes. But not until—"

"Daphne!" protested her mother. But Daphne was half through the doorway already.

"Wait there," she said—though no one was attempting to follow her—and then, with the click of a closing latch, she had gone.

In five minutes—five minutes of quite indescribable silence and tension in the sitting-room—she was back again. "I've done the trick," she announced to the room in general. "Don't ask me how."

There was no need to ask her how. It was so obvious that the means consisted simply of moral courage—though of the kind of moral courage which cannot exist where people are living under one roof.

"Oh, Daphne," said Mrs. Hamilton, still fluttering her hands; "I do hope you weren't rude."

"Not in the least," said Daphne calmly. "Never been politer in my life." And then, turning to her expectant sister: "He says you can have him to dinner any night next week that you like."

"You mean—you mean Ian?"

Daphne smiled mischievously.

"I believe that was the name," she answered.

"Oh!" cried Felicity. "Mummie! Do you hear? Daphne—darling—I—"

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"Rot," said Daphne, now searching for something on the sofa.

"But—"

"Rubbish. Has anyone seen my bag? Oh, there it is."

"You're not going, Daphne?" from Mrs. Hamilton.

"Must," said Daphne. "Late already." And then to Felicity again: "If you come back with me, I'll show you that what's-its-name."

A typical utterance, this, from Mrs. Lennox, who could seldom bear to say anything straight out, and yet could never trouble to invent an adequate disguise. Felicity understood, correctly, that her sister wanted to speak to her alone. She accepted the vague invitation at once.

In the taxi, however, Daphne's mood had changed.

"For heaven's sake don't keep on thanking me," she said. "I only did it because—well, because I wanted to, I suppose. Besides, father only said he'd *see* him. We never mentioned the word 'engagement.'"

"But of *course* it'll be all right, if once they meet," said Felicity confidently.

"Um," mused Daphne. "That depends on what you mean by 'all right.' Marriage isn't all jam, you know."

This sinister reminder had about as much effect on Felicity as a drop of water on a furnace.

"So don't blame me," added Daphne, "if you're sorry about it afterwards."

"Oh, but of *course* we shan't ever—"

"Of course not," mocked Daphne. And then, as though suddenly ashamed of her mockery, she leant out of the window and gave a quite unnecessary direction to the driver. When she sat down again, her fit of cynicism seemed to have passed.

"Darling," she said, "I expect you'll both be terribly happy. After all, why not?" She began fumbling in her bag for small change. "Perhaps you'd like to use my telephone?" she suggested.

"Only don't take more than half an hour."

And so it was from Daphne's house that Felicity rang up Ian's office.

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Strictly speaking, of course, it was no more Ian Foster's office than that of the young lady who received and passed on Felicity's call. However, don't let us split hairs. Ian drew a monthly cheque of twenty pounds, sixteen shillings and eightpence for his daily attendances at the place, and if that didn't make it his office then one would like to know what could. As to what he did for this money, that is neither here nor there. He was supposed to be "learning the business"—a process of education which bore a considerable resemblance to the old-fashioned method of learning to swim. In that method, you may recall, the pupil was dropped into a river, lake or ocean, and the instinct of self-preservation was supposed to do the rest. In Ian's case he had been dropped into the City and left to develop a complete knowledge of its practices and pitfalls by coming into collision with the one and falling abruptly into the other. In a busy business no one had ever had time to do more for him than this, and on the whole it hadn't panned out so very badly. In the course of three years he had learnt enough to be able to do nearly all the work of the man immediately above him, and to make the man immediately below him do almost all the work that he was supposed to do himself. This system is known as "efficient co-ordination," and carried to its logical conclusion implies that the head of the firm does no work at all, and that the junior office boy is ultimately responsible for everything. Roughly speaking, this sums up the position in any smooth-running organisation.

In rare moments of introspection Ian was aware that he loathed this work, but for the most part he took it as it came, played golf twice every week-end and was reconciled to his place in the universe. Besides, with the handicap of six years at a public school and three years at a university, he was lucky enough—and knew it—to be earning anything at all.

One day, if all went well, he would drop into a partner-

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ship. But this wasn't the future that he dreamt of. That vision—until Felicity turned up—showed him miraculously transported to a job in the country. Something to do with horses; something where one went about in old clothes, with a couple of dogs at one's heels—setters, very likely, or cocker spaniels. Meanwhile he lived in lodgings, and drew what comfort was possible from the interested affection of his landlady's cat.

But in Felicity's mind, as she waited to hear his voice on the line, it was Ian's office and Ian's office alone. A composite picture which drew something from her mother's bank, something from the stationery department at Harrod's, and a great deal from the business scenes in American films. Ian would thus be sitting at an enormous roll-top desk, covered with telephones and paste-bottles and cardboard boxes, in a vast apartment with a quantity of glass-panelled doors. A tape-machine would be disgorging into a high, narrow waste-paper basket, and a number of minor characters—vaguely identified as "the staff"—would keep running in and out of the glass-panelled doors, rather like people in a farce. As for the atmosphere of the place, that would be charged with a tense, electrical excitement. The words "My God, I'm ruined!" or "Thank Heaven, we're saved!" would be heard there twenty times a day, but in either case Ian himself would remain imperturbably at his desk, calm, serious and—and perfect. The last adjective was for private consumption only.

Actually, of course—but then who wants an actual description of an insurance broker's office? Let us merely record that Ian's room had originally been part of a corridor, that the light of day could only reach it by means of a reflector hung outside the window, and that in order to get his knees under the little table at which he worked, its four legs had to be supported on four volumes of company reports. Romance had never yet entered it, save by the tangled green cord of the solitary, antiquated telephone—and even by this route only since the twenty-third of January. "Can I speak to Mr. Foster, please?" Felicity had asked

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—with her usual unnecessary and unsuccessful attempt to sound like nobody in particular. A moment's agonising suspense; and then—utterly satisfying—Ian's slow, low-pitched and unmistakable "Hullo?"

"Ian! Ian, it's me. No; wait. Ian, something wonderful has happened." As an afterthought: "Ian. Are you alone there?"

"Yes. Absolutely. But what is it?"

Felicity explains—breathlessly, confusedly, and with the cart so constantly before the horse that Ian is left protesting: "But you said we oughtn't to dine there again."

"No, no. Not at Daphne's. Can't you understand? It's *father*. He wants to see you. He wants to talk to you."

"About us?"

"Yes, of course. Ian, I know it's going to come right. And he said, 'Any night next week.' Could you manage  
—"

"Monday? Of course. Shall I wear a black tie?"

The amazing (though fascinating) conventionality of men!

"Never mind about that. Ian, I expect father'll want to ask you about your income. What's the most you can say without actually telling a lie?"

The amazing (though fascinating) dishonesty of women!

"Oh . . . Well . . ." Ian's voice now suggests—correctly—that he is stabbing at a blotting-pad with a paper-knife.

"This is what I mean to say," Felicity explains. "It's rather important that we should come out with the same thing."

"Oh, quite. Of course it is. Well—look here—perhaps I could see you?"

"When?"

"I meant some time before—before—"

"I daren't risk it, Ian. It's all absolutely touch and go at the moment, and—"

"But look here. Here's an idea. Couldn't I come a bit

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early on Monday evening—I mean, sort of accidentally, as it were—and—”

“Just a minute. I must think.” Silence for seven seconds, and then: “Ian?”

“Hullo?”

“Yes. Come at ten minutes to eight, and I’ll be in the drawing-room. That ought just to give us time.”

“I’ll be there.”

“And, Ian—”

“Yes?”

“Lay it on as much as you can about your prospects. Tell him you’re bound to be a partner quite soon. I’ll back you up, you know.”

“Oh, rather. But, I say, will he think another ten or fifteen years ‘quite soon’?”

“Don’t tell him that. Keep it a bit vague—if you see what I mean.”

“I’ll do my best,” says Ian obediently; and then the conversation becomes so confidential, not to say maudlin, that further transcription must be abandoned. Much of it is occupied with ascertaining such points as whether the letter written by the one party yesterday morning was an answer to the letter written by the other party on the previous evening, or whether it was an independent effusion which had missed its proper post. The two parties also take pains to renew certain pledges of affection, which have now been exchanged so often that in any other circumstances they might almost have been taken for granted. In addition to this, each party embarks on a valiant attempt to describe the effect on him or her of the other party’s voice—attempts which the poverty of the English tongue ultimately defeats. And finally—quite as though it were an entirely fresh subject—they return to the question of their correspondence.

“You’ll write to me to-night, won’t you?” says Felicity.

“Yes, rather. I’ve just written to you, ’s a matter of fact, but—”

“Oh, no! Have you? How sweet of you!”

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"Had you written to me?"

"Yes. But I'll try and write again—if I possibly can."

"You will, won't you? I say, did you get the letter I . . .?"

But we really cannot go on wasting good paper and ink on dialogue like this.

### 3

The ten-minute conspiracy on Monday evening had shown the financial position to be as follows. Ian's earned income ("Only mind you say you're expecting a rise") was two hundred and fifty pounds a year. His unearned income, paid quarterly by the lawyers who acted as his trustees, was another three hundred pounds. "It ought to be more," he explained, "but it's all tied up."

"What a shame!" said Felicity sympathetically. "Can't anyone—anyone untie it?"

Ian didn't think this possible. "It was in my governor's will," he said.

"Well, never mind. It sounds awfully safe that way."

"Oh, yes," Ian agreed. "It's as safe as houses." He made a fresh effort at concentration. "That means," he went on, "that I've got five hundred and fifty—"

"Call it six hundred," Felicity threw in.

"—only, of course, there's income tax to be remembered."

"Of course," said Felicity cheerfully. "But father won't need to be reminded of that. He never thinks of anything else. And is that all?"

"I'm afraid it is."

"Well, father gave Daphne three hundred a year when she married, and I can't see any earthly reason why he should give me less. And six and three is nine—why, Ian, we should have practically a thousand pounds a year! Shouldn't we?"

"Well—"

"It's a fortune!"

"Yes, but—"

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“How much is it a month?”

Ian scowled, muttered something beneath his breath and practised five-finger exercises in the air.

“About—about eighty-five quid,” he said finally.

Felicity was overwhelmed.

“That’s more than four times the allowance I get now,” she exclaimed. “And there’d only be two of us.”

“Yes,” Ian admitted. “But then you’re living at home.”

“Well, wouldn’t I be living at home if we were married?”

“Of course; but—”

“And everyone says it’s cheaper for two people together than separately; and, besides, we shouldn’t need nearly such a large house as this.”

Ian was intoxicated by her enthusiasm. Moreover, it was the unknown Mr. Hamilton’s business—surely not his—to throw cold water. He summed the situation up in a way which both he and Felicity found entirely satisfactory.

“You’re an angel,” he declared. And, with a hasty glance at the doorway, they embraced each other as passionately as the tulle in Felicity’s dress would permit.

A moment later, when Mrs. Hamilton came into the room, her daughter was standing on a footstool before the fireplace—doing something to her hair with the assistance of the convex looking-glass—and her future son-in-law was examining the binding of a novel on the little table by the sofa.

Felicity turned round, and stepped off her eminence.

“This,” she somewhat superfluously announced, “is Ian.”

Mrs. Hamilton and Mr. Foster—to each of whom the other appeared slightly out of focus—contrived, notwithstanding this obstacle, to shake hands. They followed this action by the exchange of a few quite unintelligible words, after which achievement they laughed, realised that they were laughing, disliked the sound of it, and stopped.

Ian then said that it was very cold.

Mrs. Hamilton agreed that it was very cold, but added that she always found these houses very warm. She spoke, for some reason, as if she had spent several years in every

## GREENERY STREET

house in the street, and detecting this implication in her answer, felt it necessary to explain that she hadn't. "At least," she substituted, "we've always found *this* house very easy to keep warm."

"Ah," said Ian. "I suppose it faces south."

Mrs. Hamilton wasn't sure. She appealed to Felicity, who confessed that she hadn't the faintest idea. At this moment Ian recalled, with the utmost certainty, that the house faced due west; and the thought that Mrs. Hamilton must have known this too, but had professed ignorance from a notion of tact, made him feel far more uncomfortable than ever. The room began swimming before his eyes.

"Er," he said. "Ah—"

"Do sit down, won't you?" interrupted his hostess.

"Oh, I—thank you, I—" He had been on the verge of explaining that he never sat down, but fortunately checked himself just in time. The next interval of consciousness revealed the fact that he *was* sitting down.

"Er," he began again. "Have you—I mean, did you—"

This time Felicity cut him short.

"There's father," she said.

Ian had untwisted his legs and was up on them again in a flash, as the door opened. Heaven be praised! Mr. Hamilton was, like himself, wearing a black tie.

"Humphrey," said his hostess from the sofa, "this is—" Another difficulty. What on earth was she to call this peculiarly-situated guest? She gave it up. After all, Humphrey knew perfectly well who the young man was.

"How do you do, sir?" said Ian, courageously. As before, he extended the right hand of salutation.

But old Humphrey, who was at least ten times more embarrassed than anyone else in the room, found himself incapable of making the necessary contact. Instead, he nodded at Ian with an odd kind of familiarity—rather as though they had secretly spent the whole day together in not very respectable surroundings—and began rubbing the tips of his fingers against each other.

## GREENERY STREET

"Infernally cold," he observed. And then: "Can you drink Burgundy?"

Ian's neglected hand seemed to swell to gigantic proportions, and he lowered it quickly. Then, as no one else answered this enquiry, he realised that it was addressed to himself.

"Oh, yes—of course—rather—anything you like," he replied hastily.

Old Humphrey nodded again.

"I'll tell them, then," he said, and prepared to make his immediate escape.

It would appear, however, that he must have discovered the parlourmaid on the point of entering the room; for he stood in the doorway, with his back turned to the company while confidential mutterings drifted over his shoulders. Ian looked at Felicity, and she screwed up her mouth for a fraction of a second. "You've made a tremendous impression on both of them" was the translation of this signal. He knew that it couldn't be true; but he loved her so terribly for pretending it, that it was all he could do not to say so aloud.

Old Humphrey came in again, leaving the door open.

"That was dinner," he explained. "Shall we go down?"

Mrs. Hamilton went first; then Felicity. The two men both hesitated.

"Cut along," said old Humphrey. "I'm going to turn out the lights."

"Oh, but can't I—"

"No, no. I'll do it."

Snap! went the switches, one after another. Ian couldn't decide whether to wait for his host or to follow his hostess. He split the difference by lingering on the upper turn of the stairs.

"Ah!" said old Humphrey—emerging from the darkened drawing-room with an air of accomplishment. As he saw Ian, he began rubbing his hands together again.

"Damnable cold house, this," he said.

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Ian found it quite impossible to discover an answer. As the best way out of the difficulty, he resumed his progress down the stairs.

The scene was thus definitely transferred to the dining-room, with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton at the two extremities of the table, and Felicity and Ian facing each other at the sides. For a moment everyone present seemed to be testing the atmosphere. "Is it more or less embarrassing and nerve-shattering down here than it was upstairs?" they appeared to be asking themselves. Silently and simultaneously they reached a unanimous finding. Infinitely more.

Yet with this discovery three of them, at any rate, found the courage of despair, and dashed headlong into a triangular conversation of which it is extremely fortunate that no record remains. Ian particularly distinguished himself. Words flowed from him as from a fountain, and though he was convinced that he was exposing himself as an ignoramus, bore and chatterbox with every sentence that he uttered, his nervousness made him completely unable to stop. He shouted the other competitors down. He began sentences which he forgot to finish. He expressed violent opinions on subjects which had never previously entered his head. Worse still, he made a number of statements which he knew (and felt that the others knew also) were entirely untrue. At rare intervals he tried to check himself by eating; but it was in vain. "Can they possibly understand that I'm not really like this?" he wondered; and instantly his indefatigable voice would plunge into fresh excesses.

As for the fourth member of the party—old Humphrey—he never once raised his eyes from his plate. Yet for all this, he loomed mysteriously and oppressively over the whole table; a conversational vampire, who drew the vitality from his companions and yielded nothing in return. His unbroken silence seemed in a way to make more noise than the united babblings of the other three. It was this that they were trying to vanquish; this which at the same time urged them on and dragged them down. How could they possibly

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tell that he was trying desperately to find a way into the dialogue, only to be baffled again and again by its speed, its confusion and its lightning change of subject?

Imperceptibly they approached the threshold of the third act. The dessert had been mangled and thrown aside. The attendants had served coffee and withdrawn. Suddenly Mrs. Hamilton pushed back her chair. "How *very* interesting!" she replied to the visitor's last and most pointless observation, and then quickly—before he could come back at her—she rose to her feet.

"Humphrey," she called down the table; "we'll leave you two to talk to each other."

The moment had been inevitable. Was it not the very cause and origin of the whole dinner-party? And yet, as it was thus formally ushered in, a look of panic-stricken appeal spread over old Humphrey's features.

"Eh?" he gasped, struggling on to his legs. Ian had shot like an arrow to the door, and was holding it open. The mother and daughter passed out—the daughter again sending that encouraging little message from swiftly pursed-up lips. For a second it almost looked as though the head of the family would dash after them; but at the last moment he dropped heavily into his seat. Ian, feeling far more dead than alive, managed to close the door. "Now, then," he thought; and he tottered back to his chair.

Old Humphrey, with the manner of a cautious chess-player, leant forward and pushed a cut-glass decanter towards his guest.

"More port?" he suggested; inaccurately, since the guest had declined a previous offer from the parlourmaid. However, there was no point in explaining that.

"No, thank you, sir," said Ian. And he slid the decanter back again over the mahogany. Score: Love all.

A faint roaring sound, which had been drowned hitherto by the brilliant conversational display, began to permeate the room. Ian shifted his angle of vision from a silver match-box, and identified this sound as being caused by the gas-fire. Wonderful how they'd improved these fires during

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the last few years. Wonderful—— Dash it ! He was getting hypnotised by the beastly thing. He jerked his eyes away quickly—only to find them fixed and caught by his host.

Two feeble and apologetic smiles met in mid-air, cancelled each other out, and vanished.

“Er——” said Ian ; but old Humphrey had spoken at the same moment, and he instantly gave way.

“Looking at that gas-fire ?” old Humphrey had asked.

“Yes,” said Ian.

“Very convenient things. Save a lot of work and—ah—all that sort of thing. . . . Servants don’t like ‘em, though.”

“No ?” said Ian.

“No. Think they give ‘em headaches. Absolute rubbish, of course ; but—ah—er. . . .” And here this lively little discussion, which had looked as though it might be kept going almost indefinitely, suddenly collapsed. Old Humphrey’s voice faded away into a faint moan ; then ceased altogether.

“Perhaps he’s waiting for me to begin,” thought Ian. And he tried—Heavens, how he tried!—to recall the opening phrase of the statement which he had been preparing for the last three days—that logical and unanswerable appeal which was to clinch the matter of his engagement.

Thank God ! He’d got it.

“I know you’ll think it awful cheek,” it began. “I know you’ll think it awful cheek, but——” But what ? What had happened to the rest of it ? “I know you’ll think . . .” He glanced hastily across at his host. Old Humphrey’s mouth was wide open, his head was tilted right back, and he was gazing—apparently—at the ceiling.

Forgetting all about his search for the missing antithesis, Ian followed that mysterious gaze into the dim regions above the picture-rail. And there he discovered—or believed he had discovered—the object at which it was directed. An ancient oar, dependent from two large and rusty nails, and

## GREENERY STREET

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adorned as to its blade with the names and weights of its long since disbanded crew.

This vision came to him like a sign miraculously set in the sky.

"Is it—did you—" he began, loudly and incoherently.

"Eh ?" said old Humphrey with a start.

"That oar up there. I suppose—"

"Yes, yes. Been on my walls for—well, well ; let's call it forty years. They can't make 'em like that now ; eh ?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir—"

"What ? You a rowing man ? What college ?"

Ian told him.

"Ah ! Not in the eight, though, eh ?"

"Yes, sir, My last term."

"Henley ?"

"Had to drop out. My governor got ill."

"Oh. Ah." Old Humphrey has obviously assimilated the fact that Ian's governor is no more. But the check to this new and absorbing topic is of the briefest. In another moment they are hard at it again, immersed in technicalities and personalities ; pouring forth names and nicknames ; politely contemptuous of each other's generation, yet meeting as equals when defending their own. Felicity is—no, not forgotten ; that would be impossible. On the contrary it is she, in some way, who through the drawing-room floor and dining-room ceiling gives an extra touch of sparkle and zest to this torrent of talk. One can never—as a thousand board-rooms will bear witness—speak as brilliantly about sport as when duty demands that one should be speaking of something else. The consciences of old Humphrey and of young Ian are far from quiet. *They* know well enough that the business of the evening hasn't yet been touched. But this very sense of guilt seems to have formed a link where half an hour ago a link must have been thought impossible. The oar has certainly done its share, but it is the unacknowledged complicity in a breach of duty that has, we are afraid, done far more.

And now a point of detail has arisen—a doubt which at

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whatever cost must be given its quietus at once. Old Humphrey could have sworn that he knew every letter and figure on that ancient oar-blade by heart ; but when challenged by Ian to prove his statement that Number Seven was—contrary to the accustomed practice—the heaviest man in the boat, he had not been altogether satisfied with its truth.

“However,” he adds briskly, “we can soon settle that.”

And how ? Why, obviously by climbing on to the seats of two dining-room chairs and waving aloft two silver candlesticks—incidentally sending a shower of molten wax on to the carpet—and thus securing the evidence of the oar-blade itself.

“Just a moment. Where are my glasses ? ”

“Shall I take the candle, sir ? ”

“No, it’s all right. I’ve got ‘em now. Now, then ; can you read what it says ? ”

The shadows dart round the ceiling as the candlesticks are twisted to and fro. And then :

“By Jove, you’re quite right, sir. Though why on earth——”

“Ah ! What did I tell you ? I knew I couln’t be wrong. ‘Trelawney’—that was his name. Biggest fellow I ever saw. Became a parson afterwards, I believe, and——Yes ? What is it ? ”

The parlourmaid, closely followed by her auxiliary, has opened the door and stepped quickly back on to the auxiliary’s toes.

“I beg your pardon, sir. I didn’t know——”

“All right. Want to clear away, eh ? Right you are ; we’re just coming.”

A little extra heartiness here, to dispel the slight embarrassment of being found in mid-air.

“Here. Gimme your hand. I—p’ff—— Not as young as I was. Ah ! ”

With Ian’s assistance old Humphrey has regained the carpet.

“All right, Alice. Go ahead.”

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Ian skips gracefully off the other chair and replaces his candlestick on the table. As he looks round, he sees that his host is already leaving the room.

They have settled nothing. Half an hour alone together, and Felicity's name not even mentioned. However, it's no use staying here. He follows old Humphrey out into the hall ; finds him just turning the corner of the stairs.

An explanation suggests itself. The interview is to take place in Mr. Hamilton's study. "I know you'll think it awful cheek, but . . ." He dashes after his vanishing host, two steps at a time. Odd, though ; he'd got it into his head that the study was on the ground floor, behind the dining-room. Surely he'd seen bookshelves through an open door there, when he'd first arrived. Or perhaps—

Good Lord ! Where'd he gone to ? The doors on the little first-floor landing were closed ; the landing itself utterly deserted. Into the drawing-room ? But Felicity and her mother would be there. Inconceivable that the interview should be conducted in their presence. And yet

... He listened cautiously. Not a sound. Peered up the stairs ; down, over the banisters. Dead silence. Absolute solitude.

What on earth could have happened ? Puzzled, mystified, again in the most acute state of fear, he took two steps forward ; laid his hand on the knob of the drawing-room door ; opened it furtively, and looked in.

Felicity was sitting there alone, reading a book.

" Felicity . . . "

" Ian ! "

The book is flung on the floor. She is flying towards him.

" Ian—darling—is it all right ? "

" I— Where's your mother ? "

" Mummie ? Gone up to her sitting-room—to play cards with father. But—"

" Yes, but—"

" What did he say ? Is it all right ? "

" He—he didn't say anything. We were talking about

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rowing. We never got on to you at all ; and I thought—  
Felicity, for heaven's sake, what's the joke ? ”

“ We knew it ! ” gasps Felicity through her laughter.  
“ We knew he'd never manage it. But *rowing*. How  
perfect ! ”

“ Yes, I know ; but— ”

“ It *is* all right, Ian. I'm sure of it. He *likes* you  
*tremendously*, and so does mummie. She always knows  
everything's he's thinking, and she told me as soon as we  
got outside. And, Ian—I've got a wedding-present.”

“ *What ? Where ?* ”

“ From grandmamma. Wasn't it sweet of her ! They're  
the most hideous things you've ever seen in *your* life, and  
mummie's known about it for weeks—only she wouldn't tell  
me before. We shall have to take the most frightful care of  
them, though.”

“ Care of what ? What do you mean ? ”

“ Of the present, of course. Darling Grandmamma's  
quite monstrous pearls ! ”

And at this point—which was twenty-five minutes past  
nine on the second of April—we suppose that Felicity  
Hamilton and Ian Foster became publicly and officially  
engaged. It is true that we recognise this fact less by the  
utterance of any formal sanction than by the implied with-  
drawal of the previous opposition. But if they or we  
imagine that anything more definite will be extracted from  
old Humphrey—until that moment when he shall bob his  
head at his solitary cue in the marriage service—then we  
or they will be very much mistaken. Old Humphrey will  
continue to throw those confidential nods at Ian whenever  
he finds him in the foreground, to rub his hands and com-  
plain bitterly of the English spring ; he may even approach  
the financial question by the tortuous route of his wife and  
daughter—though that is much less certain. But as far  
as his plain parental duty goes, he has finished.

For over two months he has dodged and shuffled and  
descended to every expedient which could possibly delay

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his decision. When driven into a corner he has escaped, ignominiously, into his wife's sitting-room. Having obstructed without reason, he has now removed himself from the path of true love equally without reason. Yet the true lovers are not going to reproach him. For they, on their side, can be just as unreasonable as old Humphrey. An overwhelming, staggering and almost inexplicable gratitude will now radiate from them, in the warm meshes of which old Humphrey will find himself struggling and fighting for breath. This is no subtle or conscious revenge for the long weeks of anguish through which they have passed. It is just the natural overflow of hearts which, though more than well-intentioned, are now utterly out of control. They have got to be grateful to some one. Haven't they, now?

Why, of course they have.

## III

## I

“I KNOW there’s a little street somewhere round here,” said Felicity, “which is exactly what I mean. I know I’ve driven through it when I was going somewhere.” She—though perhaps this doesn’t sound very like it—was the practical one at this stage. For though both were more or less stunned by the situation in which they found themselves, Ian was taking considerably longer to come round. He entirely agreed that a house must be secured to shelter them, and that its actual discovery would be an enormous help in bringing their engagement to its desired end; but the business-like part of his brain had its natural limits, and in the long run he was probably wise to reserve this portion for his work in the City. Away from the office, all concentration left him. “Yes, of course, darling,” he answered to everything that Felicity said. But oftener than not he had been watching her eyes instead of listening to her lips, and could only carry away with him the very vaguest idea of what had been settled.

And so Felicity—who certainly couldn’t remain in ignorance of the effect of those eyes for want of being told—became practical. While Ian continued doggedly to “learn the business,” she paid a number of calls on house-agents. She told them all exactly what she wanted and exactly how little she wished to pay. They gazed at her, fascinated, and instead of laughing in her face—as they would undoubtedly have done with anyone else—they gave her their solemn assurance that they would do their best. “You may rely on us, miss,” they said. Truth shone from their earnest countenances—yes, even when Felicity thanked them. It was only after she had gone that they realised how—inevitably—they had perjured themselves.

To this regrettable discovery they reacted according to their respective temperaments. Some did nothing at all, either then or later. Others wrote long letters suggesting

## GREENERY STREET

more or less tactfully that Miss Hamilton should revise her requirements. The majority merely flooded her with orders to view every species of unsuitable premises. Since she had asked for a small house, they sent her particulars of large houses, of flats, of country mansions, of building plots and of maisonettes. "We particularly desire to draw your attention," they wrote, "to this fine example of modern British domestic architecture. Recently decorated by a well-known firm, it is in the heart of a favourite residential district, and contains two electric lifts. The owner has instructed us to quote a price of £25,000, but for a quick sale we believe that he might be open to consider slightly less. We enclose order to view."

Felicity read every word that they sent her. She filed and sorted and underlined list after list, but the result of it all was terribly disappointing.

"What about that house in Culpepper Gardens?" Ian would ask. "You know; the one where it said 'Convenient for Underground.'"

"Mummie and I went to look at it. It may be convenient for the Underground, but it wouldn't be very convenient for us, I'm afraid."

"Noisy, you mean?"

"Noisy? The whole place was shaking like a jelly."

"Oh," said Ian. "Did you see anything else?"

"We went to the one near grandmamma's."

"Any good?"

"I don't know. It had gone." In house-hunting language this means that the quarry has been brought down by a rival—not, as you might imagine, that the earth has opened and swallowed it up.

"Oh," said Ian again. And then: "Darling, I——"

"Wait," interrupted Felicity. "We've got to settle about the house first."

Ian tried hard to say something sensible.

"Do you think it would help if I advertised?" he asked.

Felicity looked right through him.

"Daphne says," she remarked, "that the only way is to

## GREENERY STREET

keep on walking about the streets. Then suddenly you see a board before anyone else has seen it. That was the way she found the house they're in now."

"But you might go on walking for years," Ian objected, "before that happened. And even then, you might not like the house."

"Oh, but of course you'd stick to the nice streets."

"We can't afford the nice streets," said Ian.

Felicity reached for an additional cushion.

"There's another plan I've heard of," she continued. "It starts the same way."

"What, walking about?"

"Yes. You walk about until you see the house you want—whether it's to be let or not, I mean. And then you ring the bell and ask the people what they'll take to clear out. Daphne says as often as not they're so surprised that they mention some ridiculous price before they've had time to think."

"Ridiculously high or ridiculously low?"

"Low, of course."

"Oh," said Ian for the third time. "Yes, I see." And then the objections began to crystallise. For one thing the plan implied choosing one's residence entirely by the outside. For another it required a good deal more nerve than he felt he possessed. "And, besides," he added for about the three hundredth time, "I've got no capital."

Felicity showed no impatience at the reappearance of this announcement, for in some curious way it seemed to both of them rather a creditable state of affairs. She did, however, contribute her customary correction.

"You mean," she said, "that it's tied up."

Ian agreed.

"Yes," he answered. "That's what I meant."

The point being once more settled, they went ahead again.

"If you feel like that about it," said Felicity, "we'd better try the other plan."

"Looking for a board, do you mean?"

"Yes. I'm sick to death of these agents. Couldn't we

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try after lunch on Sunday—that is, if you're lunching here?"

"Am I?" asked Ian.

"Of course you are."

This disposed of the housing question for nearly forty-eight hours, and it was for just such a period of quiescence and inactivity that we may imagine Greenery Street to have been waiting. It couldn't reach Ian, for Ian had never seen it; but in Felicity's subconscious memory it began stirring and struggling. With its years of practice there is no street to touch it for tracking down potential newly-married couples. To see its innocent expression you would never guess the irresistible strength of its will.

A picture began to form itself in Felicity's mind of two rows of symmetrical doorsteps, of first-floor French windows which opened on to diminutive balconies, of a sunny little street with scarlet omnibuses roaring past one end and a vista of trees seen facing the other. Sometimes it was so clear that she could almost read the name on the corner lamp-post; sometimes it faded to a blur, or the view-point changed so that only one house was visible. Neat little area railings, a brightly-painted front-door with a shining brass knocker. It opened and showed a narrow passage-hall, lighted by a window on the turn of the stairs; and in at this window there came the green light of sunshine filtered through leaves. "That's the house we're going to live in," she said to herself. "But where did I see it?" Where could she have been going when a momentary glimpse from a taxi had shown her that passage-hall and that window? And why had she forgotten all about it at the time, only to find it lodged so obstinately in her memory now?

On Saturday morning she went out by herself in an attempt to find it again, but though as a matter of fact she twice came within two hundred yards of it, Greenery Street chose still to conceal itself. Perhaps it didn't wish to make itself too cheap at first; or perhaps it had decided that Ian must be there, too. Felicity returned for lunch baffled, and with a slight headache. She tried to tell herself that the vision which had now been haunting her for over a week

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"It sounds as though it had been in the summer," he suggested presently. "Would that be any help?"

"... or what I had on," mused Felicity. She seemed to attach great importance to this form of *memoria technica*, which is much employed by members of her sex; but Ian was left more at a loss than ever.

"A parasol?" he ventured hesitatingly. Though hardly an article of clothing, it seemed to go somehow with the picture of the sunny street, and Felicity bowling down it in an open taxi.

To his astonishment the word evoked a loud cry of pleasure.

"Ian! You genius! Of *course* it was. It was that pink one; and I left it with Miss Paterson, and she sent it back the next day, and they never told me, and I only found it when we came back in the autumn, and I believe the kitchen-maid had been using it all the time, because—"

"Wait! Who's Miss Paterson?"

"Used to teach me music. And I was going to tea with her that day—in Battersea. 'Eureka Mansions'—that was the name; or—well, it was something like that, and—"

"Yes, but how—"

"Don't you see, darling? We've only got to get into a cab at Sloane Square and tell it to go to Miss Paterson's, and we're bound to pass this street I mean on the way."

There was no arguing with such breathless ingenuity.

"All right," said Ian. "How do we get back to Sloane Square? Up here?"

"No; it's the next turning, I think—on the other side there."

If there were one thing that Ian prided himself on, it was his bump of locality.

"Oh, but surely now," he protested. "That would take us right down to the river."

Felicity wasn't listening.

"Do you know," she said slowly, "I'm not at all sure that it *was* 'Eureka.' Do you think it could have been 'Euclid'?"

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"Well, wouldn't it be enough if we just said plain Battersea? I mean—— Hullo. Hi! Taxi!"

"Ian! What on earth are you doing?"

The taxi came slithering over to their pavement, and stopped.

"I thought it would save time," Ian explained. "Jump in, darling, and I'll talk to the man."

Felicity jumped in, and—the flag having been lowered—Ian and the driver settled down to a protracted discussion, inaudible through the closed windows, but richly decorated with gesticulations. Presently the driver climbed down from his seat, and—somewhat to Felicity's surprise—he and Ian began walking away together. Then Ian, unaccompanied, came running back.

"Look here," he said, opening the door again; "the man thinks you must mean Greenery Street. It's just round the corner here. Would you like to have a look?"

"But is it like what I said?" asked Felicity cautiously.

"Exactly," said Ian. "And one of the houses has got a board up."

This fetched her out of the cab in a twinkling. Back they ran together to the corner, and then:

"It is!" cried Felicity. "Ian—isn't it enchanting!"

They paid off the heaven-sent driver with a lavish tip and no less lavish thanks, and hurried towards the board. What if it only said "To be Sold"?

It didn't. The house—number sixteen—was definitely and unmistakably to be let. "Apply to the sole agents, Messrs. Gibbons and Duke."

"We must go over it at once," Felicity decided.

"But we haven't got an order."

"Never mind that."

"And it's Sunday afternoon."

"I can't help it. I'm not going back without seeing it."

"All right," said Ian. "We'll have a shot."

They mounted the three steps, and rang the bell.

"I *know* this is the street for us," Felicity kept on saying.

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"I know this is where we're going to live. I—Ian, what's that?"

A head had emerged from a window down in the area—a distinctly repulsive head, whose eyes gazed coldly up at them while its jaws moved with a steady, chewing action. Ian leant over the railings.

"Can we look over the house?" he asked.

The head stopped chewing for a moment, and appeared to swallow something.

"Do you think we might look over the house?" added Felicity.

The head shook itself slowly.

"Not on Sundays," it announced, in an unpleasant voice.

"Oh, but *please!*!" said Felicity.

The head began chewing again, and—still chewing—was withdrawn.

"Do you think she's coming up?" asked Ian in a low voice. "Or was that the end?"

"Wait," said Felicity, holding her breath.

They listened with their ears strained to the utmost. Two agonising minutes went past, and then—suddenly—there came the sound of a bolt being shot back. The door was opened sufficiently to reveal that the head possessed an equally unattractive body, attired in a white silk blouse and a sports coat.

Felicity began her appeal again at once.

"We'd only be five minutes," she said. "Please let us in. We're simply *longing* to come and live in this street, and Sunday's the *only* time we have. I know it's *frankly* inconvenient, but . . ." And so on. Undignified, if you like, but more than enough to melt the heart of a stone. Ian contributed an unobtrusive jingling of the change in his trousers pocket, and for a fleeting instant an almost human look passed across the door-keeper's face.

"I oughtn't to do it," she said.

"No, no," Felicity agreed. "But you will, won't you?"

"I wouldn't do it," added the door-keeper, "if Mrs. McIntosh wasn't away."

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"Oh, but of *course* not. And we wouldn't *dream* of bothering you, if only . . ."

Silently the door-keeper melted out of their path. They were in the little passage-hall, and Ian had closed the door behind them.

"Only five minutes, now," came the grudging reminder. "And I'll be 'ere when you come down again."

"Oh, *thank* you," cried Felicity. And with Ian at her heels she began dashing from door to door. "The dining-room. Isn't it perfect? You see, you'd get the sun in the mornings. And this would be your little room. Oh, look, they've got a telephone! Be quick, Ian; let's go upstairs. Oh, what an enchanting little garden. We'd have it paved, wouldn't we?" (All incoming tenants in Greenery Street decide to pave the little gardens, but none of them ever stay long enough to carry their decision into effect.) "And this must be the drawing-room. Do you think that frightful photograph is Mrs. McIntosh? Ian—come here; what do you suppose this room is? Oh, I see; it's the other half of the drawing-room. Isn't it sweet? Just the right size, and—Ian! Where are you?"

"Looking at the bath. It's all rusty."

"Never mind; we'll get a new one. Look—this is the bedroom. There's that hideous photograph again. They must be awfully fond of whoever it is. What's this place next door?"

"Dressing-room, I should say. By Jove, F'licity, look at all those boots! Millions of 'em. The fellow must be—"

"Oh, do leave the boots alone. It's the house we're looking at. What happens up those little stairs?"

Ian ascends three steps and peers over the banisters. His report is delivered in a hoarse whisper.

"Servants' bedrooms. Obviously."

"Nothing else?"

"No."

And here the same quite unexpected thought flashes simultaneously across their separate minds. It is a thought which, at this particular point, has visited so many pros-

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pective tenants in Greenery Street that a sufficiently sensitive medium could probably read it off the wallpaper on every one of the thirty-six second-floor landings. And yet—though sometimes, as with Ian and Felicity now, a quick look passes between them—it is a thought which these prospective tenants invariably keep to themselves.

For supposing (this is the question which suddenly comes to them) we do take this little house and come and live here; and supposing—only supposing, mind you—we were to have—well, not to put too fine a point on it, a baby; then—though of course we have no intention of having anything of the sort—would there be room for it up there on the top floor? How Greenery Street must chuckle to itself when it reads this thought in their minds! Perhaps it was nervous once, when it found how frank and well-informed its inhabitants were getting, that a couple would one day come along who would ask this question aloud. It must have known well enough what a disastrous effect an honest answer would have on its own position and prospects. But it has got over that anxiety again now. These modern couples may be staggeringly open when it comes to other people's babies; they may even—in the requisite atmosphere—be staggeringly open about their own. But that atmosphere is not to be found on the second-floor landings in Greenery Street, with a house-agent jangling his keys in the background, or an impatient janitress masticating at the foot of the stairs.

The moment always passes—as it passed with Felicity and Ian now—and the next time that this odd, vague and unimportant notion enters their heads, it will be too late. They will be definitely committed to their new house, and the inadequacy of its attic bedrooms will have come to be accepted as a slightly regrettable but quite unavoidable matter of course. Thus Greenery Street laughs quietly to itself. It is getting old now, but like its contemporaries it has ceased to believe in change.

The two house-hunters have completed their inspection in well under the stipulated five minutes, though it is true that they have entirely forgotten about the basement.

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Half-way down the stairs they pause and whisper something, while a silver coin is furtively transferred from Ian's pocket to Felicity's hand.

"Leave it to me," murmurs the practical partner. "I'll ask her."

And in the passage-hall, where the silk blouse and sports coat are still waiting, she immediately fulfills her promise.

"Could you tell us," she asks, "whether anyone has made an offer for this house yet?"

The sports coat looks dubious.

"I couldn't say, miss," she answers finally. "There've been whole crowds of people over it these last few days. But I couldn't say nothing definite. You see, Mrs. McIntosh is away."

They all nod gravely at the repetition of this news, and Ian—perhaps with some idea of showing that he is at least as much to be reckoned with as the whole crowds of people—suddenly asks :

"What about the drains?"

Felicity is distinctly impressed. The sports coat is slightly resentful.

"Well, sir, you really ought to ask Mrs. McIntosh about that. We've never had no trouble with them—not since I've been 'ere."

Ian is completely satisfied.

"I'm very much obliged to you," he says.

"Thank you *most* awfully," adds Felicity; and the half-crown which she has been fingering ever since Ian gave it her merges insensibly into the sports coat's hand. The visitors then leave the premises, and go straight across to the opposite pavement, where they turn and gaze up at the French windows.

"Well?" they ask each other.

The answer is inevitable. By hook or crook 16, Greenery Street has got to be theirs. They can't describe what it is that has attracted them; they would even find some difficulty in describing to a third party how the house is planned. They just know—as thousands of other couples

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have known in the past and will know in the future—that they have found the place where they are going to live. To-morrow morning Messrs. Gibbons and Duke shall leave this too.

"You see, darling," says Felicity, waving her hand excitedly, "it's just *exactly* what we want. You know, is, don't you?"

Yes; Ian knows it is.

Felicity takes his arm, and—inspired by the joy of their discovery—suddenly enriches her native tongue with an entirely new adjective.

"It isn't only that it's so perfect in itself," she says, "but it's so frightfully get-aboutable-from."

And so they pass happily away to their tea.

### 3

About eighteen hours have elapsed, and the scene has shifted to Messrs. Gibbons and Duke's office. Mr. Duke himself is enthroned behind a small, flat-topped desk, and Ian and Felicity are planted on the edges of two bent-wood chairs.

A terrible blow has just befallen them.

"I'm sorry, sir," Mr. Duke had said. And then, to Felicity: "I'm sorry, madam. But Mr. McIntosh's letter is quite definite. I really don't see what more can be done." And then, in a burst of sympathetic confidence, he had actually exhibited the unspeakable Mr. McIntosh's letter for their inspection.

The letter was short, but completely fatal. With no better excuse than that he had "changed his plans," the recreant McIntosh—belying the nobility of his countless boots—announced his decision to withdraw his house from the market. A hypocritical apology for the trouble which he had given seemed but to heap insult on injury.

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Duke, "that in any case Mr. McIntosh had practically accepted an offer from another quarter, but I must say that I am very surprised at his treatment of us. I suppose I've had hundreds of these Green-

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Street houses through my hands since I've been in business—literally hundreds—but I've never had this happen before. People don't seem to realise the trouble they give, and that," added Mr. Duke, "is a fact."

There was a short and painful silence while the house-agent and his two clients remained transfixed, as it were, by their varying reactions to Mr. McIntosh's villainy. And then that reference to the "hundreds of houses" seemed to light a glimmer of hope in Ian's soul.

"I suppose there might be another one later on?" he suggested tentatively.

"My dear sir," replied Mr. Duke, "I assure you, without exaggeration, I have a waiting-list for those Greenery Street houses that long." And here he extended his arms to their widest possible reach. "Those houses," he further stated, "are the most sought-after houses on my books."

Ian glanced at Felicity, and she looked quickly away. A horrible fear seized him that she might be going to cry.

"If only—" he began wildly; and as he spoke, the telephone on Mr. Duke's desk started to ring.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Duke politely, drawing the instrument towards him and helping himself to the receiver. Ian looked at Felicity again, and this time she met his eyes bravely. The secret code of pursed-up lips added: "This has almost broken my heart, but I can just bear it as long as I have you."

With his eyes now firmly transferred to the framed advertisement of an insurance company, Ian stretched out his right hand. With her eyes no less rigidly directed at the top of Mr. Duke's head, Felicity's left hand moved to meet it. The two hands joined, gripped each other passionately, and withdrew. And at this moment—as though that mischievous street had only sought to test the sincerity of their affection—the miracle happened.

Mr. Duke suddenly plucked the telephone-receiver from his ear and planted his palm over the mouthpiece.

"This," he announced, with signs of genuine emotion, "seems almost providential. I have just this very moment

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received instructions to dispose of the lease of Number Twenty-three. A corner house," he concluded impishly.

" Ian!" gasped Felicity. " Ian—we must take it at once."

And take it they did. The endless waiting-list shrivelled and vanished before the fire of their (and Mr. Duke's) enthusiasm. Without leaving the room, Ian committed himself in writing to an offer to pay the full premium asked for a two and a half years' lease.

" Get it on afterwards!" said Mr. Duke. " A mere formality." And besides, as he may have told his own conscience, they would be out again long before then. Bunker's reference? Solicitor's? Ian was ready with them both.

" It's customary," added Mr. Duke, " to give the name of some householder who could vouch for—"

" That's all right," interrupted Felicity. " Father."

And down went old Humphrey's name on the growing list.

" And now, sir," proceeded Mr. Duke, " if you would just sign the usual form, in triplicate— Ah, thank you."

Ian had spent three years in the City learning not to affix his signature to documents which he hadn't read, but he obeyed Mr. Duke's instructions like a lamb.

" There," he said. " There." And again: " There."

" Thank you, sir." Mr. Duke tossed the sheaf of papers into a wire tray. " And you may absolutely rely on us. We'll put the whole thing through as quickly as we possibly can. There shall be no delay." He stood up. " Good-morning, sir. Good-morning, madam. You've been most fortunate, if I may say so. Most—but there; you don't need me to tell you *that*. Very trying business finding a house in these days. Very trying indeed. But I'll see this goes safely through. You may rely on me—absolutely. Good-morning, sir. Good-morning, madam."

Thus Felicity and Ian were waited over the threshold, and found themselves on the pavement. For a moment they both stared vaguely at the neighbouring architecture,

the Welsh border by an urgent command from his father to go back and obey the great physician's advice. So, leaving Richard Fall to go on alone, he returned south, and went into quiet lodgings not far from the Leamington pump-room. The simple way of life enforced upon him here proved to be beneficial in the extreme, and after a visit to his old tutor, Mr. Walter Brown, newly presented to the living of Wendlebury, in Oxfordshire, he found himself once more at Herne Hill in the best of health and spirits, and spent the later months of the year in literary work, at the same time seeing a good deal of very distinguished society—indeed, among other people the poet Rogers and J. M. W. Turner, who little realized what a champion and interpreter he was destined to have in the author of the *Poetry of Architecture*.

Much of 1842 went in travel to Ruskin's beloved Switzerland in search of copy, a good deal of time being spent at Chamounix in studying the different aspects of Mont Blanc, and some more elysian days at Fontainebleau. But there is no need to give the details of this tour, as it would be mere repetition both to writer and reader. Some formal term-keeping there may have been at Oxford, but we are inclined to think that this was put off till the following year, the year that was to offer the surprise to mankind of a youth with little experience, but an infinite and far-reaching talent, attacking the opinions of which they had made gods—yes, and conquering them!

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## SECOND QUARTER.

ARTISTIC LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

(1843-60).

### CHAPTER IV.

“MODERN PAINTERS.”

THE Ruskin family had removed during the last months of the year 1842 from the house on Herne Hill to one on Denmark Hill. The reason for this change was not merely the increasing wealth of the wine-merchant, but the entry of his son into the academic and literary worlds, an entry which the *Poetry of Architecture* had begun, the articles in *Blackwood's Magazine* in defence of Turner forwarded, and the issue of *Modern Painters* would make a triumph.

Mr. Ruskin, senior, convinced of the approaching greatness of John, determined to keep up a style more in keeping with that greatness; to open, in fact, a kind of *salon*, as they say in France, in which the young art critic and the now venerable J. M. W. Turner would be the principal lights. And this determination was to be justified almost immediately.

In May 1843, the first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared, and the exact date is as well worth finding

out and remembering as that of the appearance of the *Contrat Social*, the *Wealth of Nations*, the *Origin of Species*, *Sartor Resartus*, the *Analogy of Christianity*, the first Oxford Tract, or any of the great works that have established<sup>1</sup> or destroyed a philosophy or a system.

It is now very hard for us to realize what the conditions were under which *Modern Painters*, as a living masterpiece, challenged the criticism of the world, or what a revolution it has effected in some all-important planes of thought and labour. Possibly, indeed, we are already being overpowered by a reaction, such as that which threatens the bulwarks reared by men so different as Adam Smith and John Henry Newman: possibly Whistler and Corot are to be our guides in the realms of art, rather than Ruskin and Holman Hunt. But it will help us, if we can only get hold of some of the illustrated books of travel, some of the catalogues with critical notes, some of the drawing-school manuals, some of the illustrated periodicals, some of the engravings hung on walls, some of the plaster statues erected in public places, that were common before 1843. So far as these enable us to judge, the whole taste of the day was very far from being true to nature, as commonly defined, and did not run in the direction of accuracy, either in history, or in geology, or in anatomy, or in botany; and, whereas the defence made in favour of popular old masters and popular new ones alike was that they used their imaginations to interpret nature, it is easily seen that they either did not do

<sup>1</sup> The words are used with a reservation.

anything of the sort, or else made their interpretation libellous. Claude's composition, "A Scene in the Campagna," in which a number of bulls and sheep are being driven by a mediaeval shepherd into the water of a brook, while a fairly modern picnic party with bag-pipers is being charged (for no apparent cause) by a body of ancient Roman soldiers careering past the side of a water-mill which has no connection with the river on which it stands—Claude's composition may serve for an example of what among the "classics" was gazed at in our galleries with reverent admiration at that time. For examples of equally bad and far worse art among the moderns we only need to visit any old, permanent, and private collection.

In our own day we do not lack those who profess to admire pictures of Dutch coal-cellars, and Italian saints whose legs do not support their bodies; but in 1843 there was no one else on hanging committees. Classicalism had run mad, being untempered, and that for the worse, by the animalists of the Flemish schools; and though the age when men depicted the Magi in tail-coats worshipping the Infant was over for ever, yet there was still a widespread falseness in taste and ideals that threatened to ruin, by its association, both imaginary and historical painting, and by its neglect, landscape painting. By its neglect, landscape painting, at least, the statement is true; for since it is easy to infuse a living and grotesque sentiment into a group of figures or into the portrait of an eminent alderman, but not easy to infuse it into the view of a landscape,

ew ambitious artists would waste their time upon wild nature, and still fewer, even if they were willing to waste their time, could keep their Roman soldiers and mediæval shepherds off the scene. Nevertheless, the rules laid down by authorities for the composition and portrayal of landscapes were numerous and complicated in the extreme. One was told where to put one's brown<sup>1</sup> tree and where one's ruined castle, where one's flock of goats and where one's temple grove, while tradition was the all-important thing, and men had to ask, not so much what were the characteristics of rocks, flowers, and trees as they occurred in the wilds, as what were their characteristics in the pictures of Cuyp and Rousseau. In fact, the condition of art, especially British art, in the early part of the nineteenth century, appears to have been very much like the condition of the Jewish religion in the time of Christ. And into this ponderous, affected, and false atmosphere *Modern Painters* came like a bomb-shell, and with the most tremendous result possible: all sorts of learned rubbish and extinct formulae, every variety of theatrical creation and its annotatory solemn and impressive fudge, went down like packs of cards amid vain shrieks of indignation from all interested parties. Imagine the confusion of the dogs when the snake came into their midst; imagine the relief of the crowd in the fairy tale of Hans

<sup>1</sup> Claude is not singled out here because he is excessively bad; he is no mean painter, but as one of the best and least offensive in the school condemned by Ruskin. "If Claude is wrong," says a critic, "what are his imitators?"

Andersen, when a little voice dared to say that the naked king had got nothing on; imagine the striking disillusionment that you can, and you will conceive the state of affairs.

The controversy, of course, was tremendous, although the fact that Ruskin had the right end of the stick is more than evidenced by this alone, namely, that of all the attempted refutations *Modern Painters* that were written at the time practically none have survived. But means he had to face on the one hand a storm of abuse from the advocates and servants of classical tradition, and on the other a coldness and discouragement from the very modern painters whom he supported, the latter thinking that his support would be the ruin, given, as it was, to what they had been led to believe blemishes, rather than virtues, in themselves. The essay in defence of J. M. W. Turner in *Blackwood's Magazine* had been the germ of the book, and is, of course, part of it; and, indeed, in the Preface to the first edition Ruskin says that he was not sure whether to announce his work as a single essay on landscape-painting in general, and apologize for its constant reference to the creations of a particular master (Turner), or to announce it as a large essay on the creations of a particular master.

<sup>1</sup> This is understood to refer specially to landscape-painting.

<sup>2</sup> Ruskin had meant to call his book, "Turner and the Ancients," but changed it to "Modern Painters; their superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to all the Ancient Masters; first Examples of the True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual, in the works of Modern Artists, especially from those of J. M. W. T. Esq., R.A."

and apologize for its constant reference to landscape-painting in general. And, without doubt, the worst faults in *Modern Painters* are its deification of an individual, and determination to use the results produced by him as a standard quite as Procrustean, though not as vicious, as any that had been aforetime. Though, of course, it has to be remembered that only a system can destroy a system; mere negation never did succeed yet.

The many eccentricities of the pre-Raphaelite school that were yet to amuse a critical world, and for which Ruskin was largely, and in an indirect manner, to blame, are pardonable when regarded in the light shed by this truth.

But, to keep to our subject, it may be said that it is better to be attacked than ignored, and that accordingly the greater the troubling of the pool the better the young author was pleased. As for John James Ruskin, he affected a certain amount of displeasure and a Philistine dislike of notoriety, and may indeed have suffered somewhat in his own private convictions regarding Fine Art, but not only showed himself, at the same time, ready to take whatever social advantage accrued from his relation to the new champion, but also did something in the way of reciprocity, by bringing the whole household more into line with that society in which a rising literary man would feel most at home. Indeed, never at any time was the maxim of Mr. W. E. H. Lecky, that the family, not the individual, is the unit of the nation, more peacefully acted upon than in the case of the little circle of the wine-merchant at

Denmark Hill. Ruskin himself never would rise alone, if he could avoid it, from the ranks of the upper middle class, while the father, on his part, wisely made up his mind that all should rise together. Yet there is a notable passage in *Fors Clavigera*, in which the author insists that he and his parents were never so happy in Denmark Hill as in Herne Hill; the house in Herne Hill, he says, was big enough for his father and big enough for him, and so proceeds to lecture everybody on the simple life, and its desirability.

Meanwhile many of the best drawing-rooms were thrown open to the new iconoclast, the world being invariably found to lick the hand that torments it, for some reason or other, probably piquancy. Lady Davy, the widow of the famous Sir Humphry Davy, gave him some valuable introductions (so far as an inarticulate incantation can be valuable), and it was at one of her celebrated receptions that he afterwards made the acquaintance of Mr. Gladstone, an acquaintance that was to be ephemeral as the snow-flake.

But the whole of the year 1843 must have formed a delightful period in Ruskin's life: he must have been in a sort of elysium. The labour which he had gone through had been terrific, especially for such a young and delicate man; he had completed some eighteen hundred pages of manuscript, a heavy task even for a copyist; he had contrived to do the work at white heat, tempered by an immense research, and sustained a tide of eloquence so magnificent as to be unparalleled outside of Hooker and Chateaubriand: finally, he had managed to give the book dramatic unity, a thing impossible to him as he

became older. And now he felt, and with justice, that he might rest on his oars, without blame or care, at least so far as his own inclinations and inspirations would permit him. He bought pictures and engravings, and enjoyed them; he went to hear good concerts; he went to see great actors; he went to meet pleasant people. One of his "crowning mercies" was the gift to him by his indulgent father of Turner's "Slaver," a picture that is most admirably described in the Third Chapter of the Fifth Section of *Modern Painters*.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot forbear to insert the following long quotations, passages in which the writer shows how far short of Nature the conventional school have fallen:—

"Stand upon the peak of some isolated mountain at daybreak, when the night-mists first rise from off the plains, and watch their white and lake-like fields as they float in level bays and winding gulls about the islanded summits of the lower hills, untouched\* yet by more than dawn, colder and more quiet than a windless sea under the moon of midnight; watch when the first sunbeam is sent upon the silver channels, how the foam of their undulating surface parts and passes away; and down under their depths the glittering city and green pasture lie like Atlantis, between the white paths of winding rivers; the flakes of light falling every moment faster and broader among the starry spires, as the wreathed surges break and vanish above them, and the confused crests and ridges of the dark hills shorten their gray shadows upon the plain. Has Claude given this?

"Wait a little longer and you shall see those scattered mists rallying in the ravines; and floating up towards you, along the winding valleys, till they couch in quiet masses, iridescent with the morning light upon the broad breasts of the higher hills, whose leagues of massy undulation will melt back and back into that robe

of material light, until they fade away, lost in its lustre, to appear again above in the serene heaven, like a wild, bright, impossible dream, foundationless and inaccessible, their very bases vanishing in the unsubstantial and mocking blue of the deep lake below. Has Claude given this?

“Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see those mists gather themselves into white towers, and stand like fortresses along the promontories, massy and motionless, only piled with every instant higher and higher into the sky and casting longer shadows athwart the rocks; and out of the pale blue of the horizon you will see forming and advancing a troop of narrow, dark, pointed vapours, which will cover the sky, inch by inch, with their gray network, and take the light off the landscape with an eclipse which will stop the singing of the birds and the motion of the leaves together; and then you will see horizontal bars of black shadow forming under them, and lurid wreaths create themselves, you know not how, along the shoulders of the hills; you never see them form, but when you look back to a place which was clear an instant ago, there is a cloud on it, hanging by the precipices, as a hawk pauses over his prey. Has Claude given this?

“And then you will hear the sudden rush of the awakened wind, and you will see those watch-towers of vapour swept away from their foundations, and waving curtains of opaque rain let down to the valleys, swinging from the burdened clouds in black, bending fringes, or pacing the pale columns along the lake level, grazing its surface into foam as they go. And then, as the sun sinks, you shall see the storm drift for an instant from off the hills, leaving their broad sides smoking, and loaded yet with snow-white, torn, steaming rags of capricious vapour, now gone, now gathered again; while the smouldering sun, seeming not far away, but burning like a red-hot ball beside you, and as if you could reach it, plunges through the rushing wind and rolling cloud with headlong fall, as if it meant to rise no more, dyeing all the air about it with blood. Has Claude given this?

“And then you shall hear the fainting tempest die in the hollow of the night, and you shall see a green halo kindling on the summit of the eastern hills, brighter—brighter yet, till the large white circle of the slow moon is lifted up among the barred clouds, step by step, line by line; star after star she quenches with her kindling light,

setting in their stead an army of pale, penetrable fleecy wreaths in the heaven, to give light upon the earth, which move together, hand in hand, company by company, troop by troop, so measured in their unity of motion that the whole heaven seems to roll with them, and the earth to reel under them. Ask Claude, or his brethren, for that.

"And then wait yet for an hour, until the east again becomes purple, and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness, like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning; watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire; watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow, like altar-smoke, up to the heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault behind vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels; and then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this his message unto men!"

The above is from one of the last volumes of *Modern Painters*; the following is from the first:—

"If, in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity, we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another it has been windy, and another it has been warm. Who, among the whole chattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that gilded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits, until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds, when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it, like withered leaves?

"All has passed unregretted or unseen ; or, if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross, or what is extraordinary ; and yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lamp-black and lightning.

"It is in the quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual ; that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood ; things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally, which are never wanting, and never repeated ; which are to be found always, yet each found but once ;—it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given."

In May 1844 this well-earned holiday came to an end, or perhaps it should rather be said, changed its form. The whole family set off in the most luxurious style for Switzerland, and came to a halt at Chambounix. The best of the registered guides was engaged, Couttet, a man who appears to have been what we should call in Scotland a "character." Yet neither the father nor the son appears to have ventured upon any real mountain climbing, although Ruskin speaks of having been as high up as five or six thousand feet during his observations of aiguilles.<sup>1</sup> But in those days Alpine exploits were more modest than they are now, and the ascent of any of the great peaks, not to speak of Mont Blanc (all the conquests of which were recorded in a very small album), was a serious matter. However, an immense number of mountain studies and cloud studies

<sup>1</sup> Rock needles.

were completed on this tour—far more, as *Præterita* has it, than the observer could ever record, or ever use; indeed, that is one of the old complaints of the man of genius, that he does not know how he is ever to communicate what he perceives. And not only the visible Universe, but Life itself, must have seemed boundless to Ruskin in those days. He must have had a vista before him of many futures, as a drowning man in the popular estimate has one of a single, mis-spent past.

Here he was, feeding the young flame of inspiration in the land of William Tell and of Manfred; indeed, with all his powers of quiet and persistent observation, he could never have borne to live in a country devoid of historical or of legendary romance, however full of natural wonders that country might have been. But, once granted this historical or this legendary romance, he would condescend to an interest in everything else, from the small fauna of the region down to the progress of sanitation.

One thing only perplexes us in regard to this and other Swiss tours in Switzerland, and that is how Ruskin could spend so much time and labour in the investigation of the great facts of geology and mineralogy as he did spend without changing his views to some extent upon the great subject of the creation of the world and the antiquity of man. Of course this visit of 1844 anteceded the revelation contained in the *Origin of Species* by some fifteen years. But, nevertheless, it must have given opportunities for the commencement of an accumulation

of scientific knowledge to be continued during the constant returns that Ruskin made to Central Europe, and should have paved the way for the acceptance of new light and the repudiation of a great deal that is false in theology. Yet we find, as time goes on, that the only attitude of the great writer of the *Stones of Venice*, the close observer who produced the *Ethics of the Dust*, to men like Tyndall,<sup>1</sup> Huxley, Romanes, Sir Charles Lyell,<sup>2</sup> Darwin, and Wallace, is one of positive abuse. The great truths of Paleontology and of Evolution are not more capable of disposal by the joke in *Fors Clavigera*, which warns working men that they are no longer sons of Adam, but of sea-slime, than by Carlyle's jeer about the monkey damnification of mankind.

It is, of course, well known that Ruskin's views on religion veered round from Calvinistic evangelicism to a peculiar system of belief, which can scarcely be defined, but which laid peculiar stress upon works, as contrasted with the mere acceptance of a creed.<sup>3</sup> But his attitude to the general trend of

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's animus against Tyndall did not arise so much from any carefully reasoned position, as from his own intimacy with Professor Forbes, the great antagonist of Tyndall. It was on the visit to Chamounix that Ruskin met Forbes, and, led by personal liking, became one of his disciples.

<sup>2</sup> Lyell is the only one of the above with regard to whom we would modify the statement in the sentence.

<sup>3</sup> Ruskin could not help seeing, as time advanced, that belief, in the ordinary sense of the term, is not in itself a moral act of mind; similarly, that unbelief is not necessarily an immoral one, or even an immoral negative state. The Calvinist school are apt constantly to confuse the belief with the moral results that spring from it.

scientific thought in the nineteenth century never changed. And this, as we say, considering the amount of his acquaintance with rocks and strata, is the remarkable thing about him. His attacks on scientists were not even as creditable as Mr. Gladstone's articles in a great review;<sup>1</sup> and yet he had opportunities for the acquisition of the special knowledge required that Mr. Gladstone never had; in fact, those who study the Huxley-Argyll-Gladstone controversy will trace a certain resemblance between the Duke of Argyll and Ruskin, as both of them were philosophers capable of letting scientific enlightenment pass through them as through a sieve, without producing a single reasonable deduction.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Ruskin showed himself no mean field geologist and a most painstaking collector of crystals during these months, and proceeded to form the nucleus of the splendid crystallographical museum that was to become to him such a source of pleasure in his last years at Coniston.

As for the drawings made at Chamounix, chiefly of aiguilles, glaciers, and exposed strata, they exhibit the most wonderful accuracy of line and wealth of detail; and one is led to the reflection, that had

<sup>1</sup> *The Nineteenth Century.* Mr. Gladstone's articles were collected into a book called the *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*.

<sup>2</sup> The men who do most harm to science may be divided into two main classes. Firstly, those who indulge in speculations and theories after an imperfect course of observation. Secondly, those who have a keen eye for facts, but see no meaning in them at all. We will not name any living example of the first class; but Lord Monboddo was once cited as an extreme one.

misfortune overtaken the Ruskin family, the draughtsman might easily have supported himself and them by the illustration of books of travel and of geological handbooks.

After many weeks at Chamounix, Ruskin visited the Italian lakes and the glorious Pass of the Simplon, of the completion of whose tunnel the master would be disgusted to hear, if he were alive, Zermatt and the Matterhorn he had seen and condemned, as was his manner, or, at least, compared very unfavourably with something else.

The family had, we think, separated from him on this tour for some little time, not being interested in glaciers and aiguilles to the same extent. But it was as a collected party that they returned home by the Col de Faucille, Montlimart, and Paris. Paris seems never to have regained its popularity with Ruskin after the affair with Adèle Domecq, so strong was his power of associating neutral scenes with human sentiments; yet he spent some very unproductive days in the Louvre, and had some of his most treasured convictions sadly upset by an intense study of the pictures by Titian and Veronese within its walls; he began to think that he had done some of the old masters an injustice, as, indeed, he had; and he modified some of the writing in the new volumes of *Modern Painters* accordingly, although wise enough to feel that the good influence which he was exercising upon the world of Art in general more than counterbalanced any wrong committed against individuals whose position is impregnable.

This brings us to the end of July 1844, or possibly, a little way past it. The remainder of the year may be regarded as uneventful, like so many periods in the life<sup>1</sup> of a man of letters, or of any man whose days are occupied with words and ideas, and not with actual deeds.

Yet the time was well spent, not in writing, or even in studying works of art, so much as in gaining an acquaintance with the literature of the subject in hand. The young author was busying himself in finding out what other people, especially other people in earlier ages of the world, had said before him, and absorbing mental food, as a change from providing it. And what he read appears among other things to have convinced him of the fact, that while he had appreciated the Gothic wonders of France and the Alpine splendours of Switzerland, he had not profited sufficiently by his sojourn among the Latin glories of Italy. Accordingly, he felt that he could not proceed with *Modern Painters* without further travelling: and he spent the early part of the spring of 1845 in making the necessary plans and preparations for yet another tour, which was to include Pisa and Florence.

The revolutionary spirit which was abroad in Europe had brought Switzerland to the verge of civil war during this winter, and everyone advised Ruskin not to take the Swiss route on this occasion: even Turner came out of his usual silence to add his voice to the chorus; but it was all to no purpose, for

<sup>1</sup> It is a well-established fact that the life of a great soldier is easier to write than that of a great poet or a great painter.

Ruskin had determined to set out in April, and kept to his determination.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following letter shows that the Ruskins were by now pretty intimate with Turner. We do not know whether it was written to the father or to the son:—

47 QUEEN ANNE (no street) WEST,  
Thursday, 27th Feb. (1845).

MY DEAR SIR,—Have the goodness to offer my respectful thanks to Mrs. Ruskin for the kind present of a part of the little fat friends and its—<sup>1</sup> Portugal onions for stuffing them included, etc., etc. Hoping you are all well.

Believe me, most truly obliged,

J. M. W. TURNER.

J. RUSKIN, Esq.

P.S.—In the *Times*, sad news from Switzerland.

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<sup>1</sup> Turner always indicates by these long lines the places in his letters where his feelings become inexpressible.

## SECOND QUARTER.

### ARTISTIC LITERATURE AND CRITICISM.

(1843-60).

### CHAPTER V.

RUSKIN took with him a youth who had been his scout at Oxford, George by name, and travelled straight to the South of Switzerland, where he was joined by Couttet, the guide, now, we think, on the retired list. The trio proceeded straight to North Italy, and made long stays at Pisa and Florence. Couttet seems to have perceived what more cultivated people had overlooked—namely, that Ruskin's life was in danger of becoming the “absorbing, overgrown life of the intellect.”<sup>1</sup> “Poor child,” said he, “he does not know how to live.”

It was at Faido and Dazio Grande that much of the last portion of the second volume and most of the first half of the third volume of *Modern Painters* was completed, the author meanwhile sending his two dependents out to make daguerrotypes for him.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Humphry Ward.

At Baveno they were joined by the painter Harding, with whom Ruskin seems to have had some previous acquaintance in London, and went on to Lakes Como and Maggiore, and then back to Verona.

At Verona a most delightful and fruitful time was spent by the two companions; and then, ostensibly for the sake of Harding, a visit was paid to Venice. Ruskin had not been anxious to go to Venice at all, but once he got there, nothing but an attack of malarial fever could and did drive him away. The two companions chartered a gondola, and sat in

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, p. 108. "Of the extended knowledge and various powers of this painter, frequent instances will be found in the following pages. Neither, perhaps, are rightly estimated among artists, owing to a certain coldness of sentiment in his choice of subject, and a continual preference of the picturesque to the impressive; proved, perhaps, in nothing so distinctly as in the little interest usually attached to his skies, which, if aerial, and expressive of space and movement, content him, though destitute of stupor, power, or character; an exception must be made in favour of the very grand sunrise on the Swiss Alps, exhibited in 1844,<sup>1</sup> wherein the artist's real power was in some measure displayed, though I am convinced he is still capable of doing far greater things. So also in his foliage he is apt to sacrifice the dignity of his trees to their wildness, and lose the forest in the copse; neither is he at all accurate enough in his expression of species or realization of real portions. These are deficiencies, be it observed, of sentiment, of perception, as there are few who equal him in rapidity of seizing of material truth."

<sup>1</sup> The date, 1844, shows that this is one of the pieces inserted in *Modern Painters* in the second edition. Ruskin was constantly bringing his work up to date; and not only up to date in matters of this kind, but in regard to his own mental and religious progress. This is what makes criticism of him difficult; he is constantly cutting the ground from beneath his own feet yours.

almost from sunrise to sunset for a whole week, studying boats and sails,<sup>1</sup> their colours in the sun, and their glorious reflections in different kinds of water.

Then Ruskin insisted, for some reason or other, on going into the Scuola di San Rocco—although Harding and everybody else told him that there was little to be learned or done there—and justified himself by finding a perfect mine of information and inspiration within its walls. *Praterita* describes the essay and its results exceedingly well, it may be said. Few things could tear Ruskin away from the Scuola as long as he remained in Venice at all, and he compelled everybody of his acquaintance to linger in the place along with him. Mr. Boxall, R.A., and a Mrs. Jameson, who seems to have been a very charming woman, arrived in the city, and joined themselves frequently to Harding and himself. Mrs. Jameson managed occasionally to wean him away from his lonely haunt, and accompany the others to the Rialto and out on the Grand Canal, where he argued with great vehemence on such questions as whether the reflection of a coloured buoy should be drawn vertically or obliquely against the slope of the wave on whose crest the buoy had risen. Meanwhile, as he lay in his bed, under his mosquito

<sup>1</sup> The Venetian fishermen appear to form a distinct class by themselves, like those of Newhaven, and, furthermore, to have guilds, like the mediæval workmen. Now the sails of their boats are blazoned or embroidered, in certain cases, with the insignia of the guilds or of the city (cf. Turner's "*Sun of Venice Going to Sea*"), and form a very beautiful spectacle.



*Præterita*, "into the faintness and darkness of the underworld."

The last part of this year, 1845, was occupied by the second and third volumes of *Modern Painters*, which were more carefully though not more eloquently written than the first had been; the work of completing the second volume alone, in a final form, continued right through the spring of 1846. The publication took place in May or in June, we are not sure which, and gave to the thinking world all that the author had acquired in the dim Scuola in Venice; a great deal was made in this volume of Tintoretto, and a great deal of religious painting, which latter subject had rather fallen into disrepute in Britain.

The issue of the new volume did not produce such a stir as the issue of the former one had produced, but this, of course, was only to be expected, and did not irritate or disappoint Ruskin or his admirers in the very least. On the other hand, some of the critics must have been displeased to find that the author had nothing of any importance to recant after his fresh sojourn in Italy, a sojourn which many bold persons had prophesied would reform and abash him.

The labour of writing had been immense up to this time, and another holiday was thought desirable. So, as soon as the more pressing matters of business had been arranged with the publisher, the whole Ruskin family set off once more for the Alpine regions. They stayed at Geneva and then passed South, and entered Italy by the pass of the Mont

Cenis, and were soon in the streets of Turin, Verona, and Venice. Probably on account of the heat of the weather, they did not stay long in any one place, and ultimately returned to Switzerland, settling down in the beloved Chamounix. At Chamounix Ruskin probably wrote a good deal of the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and some of the rough drafts for the *Stones of Venice*; he certainly made a vast number of exquisite studies of rocks, flowers, glaciers, and clouds; indeed, speaking of clouds, it is doubtful whether the painter of the sky that flamed high above "The Fighting *Téméraire*" could himself portray the soft banners of the heaven with greater delicacy than he.

One wonders why a man who loved the Alpine regions so well, and had of them such an infinite understanding, never thought of living in Switzerland for a number of years, making it his headquarters. And perhaps the answer is that the worldly wisdom and kindly ambition of his parents kept enforcing upon him the claims of civilization.

Again, when the party returned that same year in the autumn to Denmark Hill, it was found that Ruskin was now an established literary man of great reputation, and that very much would in future be expected from him. Some years previously the Scotch poet Pringle had introduced him to Lockhart, the son-in-law of Scott; and now Lockhart sought out the young lion of the day and offered him a place on the *Quarterly Review*, of which he himself was at that time editor. The work promised and received was a species of glorified reviewing, de-

manding considerable tact, and, later on, leading to disputation, in cases where Ruskin wished to censure severely some protégé of the great journal. But on the whole the connection was a pleasant one, and led to a great deal of social advancement and happiness apart from the matter of literary progress.

Social happiness, we say; but there was more than social happiness; there was love—love which brought hope and joy for a little, and then misery, possibly sufficient misery to counterbalance all the benefits that one has mentioned. Lockhart's daughter, Charlotte, a very beautiful woman, completely fascinated Ruskin on the occasion of his meeting her at a party, but at the same time would have none of him, or pretended that she would have none of him, as is the manner of women. He, consumed by his passion, and undeterred by her coldness, was yet incapable of making love to her in a rational way; he tried to astonish and captivate her by pieces of fine writing in the *Quarterly Review*, and very naturally failed, not having to deal with an intense, æsthetic maiden of a later age.

It may seem an extraordinary thing, when one comes to consider it, that a man like Ruskin should never be able to enjoy the reciprocal love of a woman; but there is no reason why it should, for great and uncommon gifts in men do not necessarily attract the other sex, and are, on the contrary, apt to terrify them, or at the least fill them with uneasiness and abasement; Napoleon could command a Continent, but not the heart of a woman, and it is commonly held that the one empire destroyed, or, rather, pre-





commends in *Fors Clavigera* as not a bad thing, and Macdonald was a high-minded and pleasant man, very much under the influence of the wave of reaction that had already set in in University circles against the school of the Tractarians on the one hand, and against fashionable infidelity on the other. The only rift within the lute was the question of sport, regarding which Ruskin was acquiring views more and more pronounced and intractable; for example, when descending Schiehallion, in the company of his host and the gamekeepers, bringing a hundred or so of living hares down in sacks as food for the tenantry, he did not like it, and angrily speculated all the while on an improved system of game-laws,<sup>1</sup> which would put all hares, pheasants, and rabbits into the possession of the people themselves,<sup>2</sup> and would not reserve them for the coursing or "battue" of gentlemen.

Then there fell upon him another deep fit of melancholy, and to cure it he found a small jungle of thistles at the foot of the great mountain, and devoted himself to their extirpation; he literally sat at times like Job or Jeremiah, among potsherds and thorns, not ceasing to speculate on why the universe existed, and whether there were a life after death,

<sup>1</sup> This was the age when all young Oxford men were trying to reform something; the game laws was a favourite object.

<sup>2</sup> If Ruskin was opposed to sport in the abstract, it was strange that it should make any difference to him whether the landlord or his tenants engaged in it. While, if he thought that the working classes would be more merciful to our flora and fauna than the genteel classes, he was mightily mistaken.

and what sort of life it might reasonably be expected to be. He sat, enjoying his selfish depression listening to the shrieks of owls, whom he felt to be not unlike himself in some respects. Bats sepulchral vaults, and churchyards were not by any means out of harmony with his mood; indeed, if he had stayed in the Scotch Highlands much longer, he might have become a second Dante, or a second Edgar Allan Poe. But Destiny was reserving him for other things.

Something drove him back to London, where he appears to have shut himself up, and spent most of his time in working at the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*. "It is work that keeps one sane."<sup>1</sup> And it was work that kept him sane, without a doubt.

He emerged from his seclusion, early in 1848, to travel with his parents to Perthshire; they probably were the guests of the few remaining relatives whom they had there, but they saw a great deal of the Grays, a Scotch family that had once lived at Herne Hill, and had now settled in the Fair City. Whether Ruskin was really in love with Euphemia Gray,<sup>2</sup> or whether he even believed himself to be, is open to question; but he became engaged to her, and, more outwardly successful than in any of his other similar experiences, married her in a parish church, early in April. The bride, an ambitious young woman, seems

<sup>1</sup> Graham Travers in one of her novels.

<sup>2</sup> When Euphemia Gray had come as a schoolgirl to the Ruskins at Herne Hill, the young author had written for her that beautiful fairy story, "The King of the Golden River."

to have rejoiced in the match, if only as a step upwards in society, which it most certainly was, and the honeymoon began and proceeded happily enough. The couple travelled through the South of England and passed over to the North of France, visiting all the glorious cathedrals of both regions<sup>1</sup>—Salisbury, Chartres, Amiens, most notably. Ruskin unfortunately was suffering from lung trouble<sup>2</sup> most of the time, and this was rather an ominous beginning of a union with a woman who worshipped physical health and strength, and seems to have been curiously unsympathetic toward nervousness and weakness. Finally, they returned to London, to Park Street West, where he at once engrossed himself in his literary and artistic work, making great headway with the two new books and the remaining volumes of *Modern Painters*.

The *Seven Lamps of Architecture* were Truth, Beauty, Power, Sacrifice, Obedience, Labour, Memory, and the author tries to attribute whatsoever is best in all the architecture that comes within his scope to the radiance shed by one of the seven or another. Unfortunately, as Ruskin himself admits, the title and scheme are both extremely arbitrary, the enumeration and division of the

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, like William Morris, was inclined to place Teutonic and Gothic things above Latin and Greek things, and, like him, was specially fond of early French architecture.

<sup>2</sup> Pleurisy attacked him at Salisbury, and was very nearly fatal. The Cathedral there appealed to Ruskin, as it has appealed to so many thinking minds. It will be remembered how the late Oscar Wilde, in a letter to a friend, said, "Go to Salisbury, young man, and steep your hands in the grey twilight of Gothic things."

qualities not being one that is apparent to the mind prior to reading the work. It has been said that Matthew Arnold's definition of conduct as "three-fourths of life" is arbitrary, but it is nothing to this, for it is a self-evident fact that conduct, or the right doing of duties, is at least more than half of life; whereas no virtues except Perseverance and Imagination are readily associated with Architecture, while the Lamp of Power might be made to absorb all the other Lamps put together. The book, amid many contradictions, exhibits some broad lines of thought from which Ruskin never entirely broke away; one of these continual postulates is that there is a reciprocity between art and morals. This is true to a limited extent, but he carries the idea to absurdity, notably in some of the works of his Socialistic period, such as the *Crown of Wild Olive*, in which he condemns the ornament on the cover of a Persian Koran as immoral ornament, that was probably the work of a sensuous or a treacherous man, who preferred curved lines to straight ones. And in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* itself he went too far, evidently being inspired to some extent by Plato and his theories of the Beauty of Holiness, and the Holiness of Beauty. Ruskin forgot that although there is such a thing as Holy Beauty, the fact does not give any one the liberty to assume an identity of Beauty and Holiness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All the Platonists, or perhaps we should say all the disciples of Plato, as *æsthetes*, follow the Greek, in escaping, when driven into a paradoxical position by the Socratic method, by means of putting

The style of the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* has been subject, like that of most of Ruskin's earlier works, to very severe criticism from a number of foolish persons to whom anything in the way of oration, anything except the shortest sentences, the baldest and most simple Saxon way of stating a truth, are highly offensive. His sentences are of course long, and the subordinate clauses consequently very frequent; in fact, he used up all the relative pronouns, so that there were none left for Browning. But where would we be without eloquence? What would we not miss in the loss of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, of Burke's speeches on the French Revolution, of Gladstone's periods on British foreign policy—we mean in the loss of them in their existing form of construction? Surely the modern craze for the imitation of America, the run upon the stock of full stops, is not to be allowed to deprive us of writers with styles of their own? For there is an evolution in style, whereby it may become justifiably more elaborate, as the facts to be described subdivide themselves from time to time.

The *Seven Lamps* being published in the spring of 1849, Ruskin set off once more for Switzerland; he mentions his family as being with him most of

a peculiar meaning upon the words Beauty, Holiness, Morality, whereas it is evident that if the meanings of words that are the representatives of fixed quantities and qualities in the minds of all the world are to be altered to meet a peculiar set of conditions, no one will know exactly where he stands, but all controversy will become like a meeting of fluid masses.

the time<sup>1</sup> (though he had his own carriage to stay behind with, if anything interested him specially), but he does not mention his wife. In fact, so silent is he with regard to her, that but for the biographies of Mr. Harrison and Mr. Collingwood, one would be apt to forget her existence, till he was reminded of it by the inevitable accounts of the celebrated divorce case.

To conclude this chapter, we do not know that we can do better than introduce some pages from *The*

<sup>1</sup> We forgot to mention that he did part company with his parents for a time, when travelling with his old college friend, Charles Newton, in the St. Gothard region. The two parted at Albergo Reale. It was, if we remember rightly, in this year also that Ruskin undertook, in company with another old friend, Edmund Oldfield, the filling of the east window of Camberwell Parish Church with painted glass. Ruskin's designs were exquisite, but too elaborate for the place; and he gracefully allowed Oldfield to alter them in the direction of simplicity; then he took it into his head, a little unreasonably, that he was not fit to undertake such work along with a decorator like Oldfield, and surrendered his part. One can imagine what a harvest the verger of this church would have reaped did it now possess a window altogether by John Ruskin. This episode (of the attempt at ecclesiastical decoration) seems to us as it were a connecting link in the comparison that we cannot help making between Ruskin and William Morris. Morris, just at the beginning of his career, had undertaken, in company with Burne-Jones and five or six others, the decoration of one of the rooms of a University building in Oxford with frescoes, but owing to the moisture of the place, and the material worked upon, the attempt can scarcely be called an enduring triumph. Again, Morris, like Ruskin, was the only son of indulgent parents, exhibited peculiar romantic feelings in childhood, was left with a fortune, began to draw and paint and gave it up, or at least made the gift subsidiary, and ended his days as a Socialistic reformer.

*Seven Lamps of Architecture*, which are remarkable both for their actual eloquence, and as exhibiting the great powers of association found in the book from which they are taken. They are to be found in "The Lamp of Memory."

" Among the hours of his life to which the writer looks back with peculiar gratitude, as having been marked with more than ordinary fulness of joy or clearness of teaching, is one passed, now some years ago, near time of sunset, among the broken masses of pine forest which skirt the course of the Ain, above the village of Champaugnole, in the Jura. It is a spot which has all the solemnity, with none of the savageness of the Alps; where there is a sense of a great power beginning to be manifested in the earth, and of a deep and majestic concord in the rise of the long low lines of piny hills; the first utterance of those mighty mountain symphonies, soon to be more loudly lifted and wildly broken along the battlements of the Alps. But their strength is as yet restrained; and the far-reaching ridges of pastoral mountain succeed each other, like the long and sighing swell which moves over quiet waters from some far-off stormy sea."

" And there is a deep tenderness pervading that vast monotony. The destructive forces and the stern expression of the central ranges are alike withdrawn. No frost-ploughed, dust-encumbered paths of ancient glacier fret the soft Jura pastures; no splintered heaps of ruin break the fair ranks of her forests; no pale, desiled, or furious rivers rend their rude and changeful ways among her rocks. Patiently, eddy by eddy, the clear green streams wind along their well-known beds; and under the dark quietness of the undisturbed pines there sprung up, year by year, such company of joyful flowers as I know not the like of among all the blessings of the earth."

" It was spring-time, too; and all were coming forth in clusters crowded for very love; there was room enough for all, but they crushed their leaves into all manner of strange shapes only to be nearer each other. There was the wood anemone, star after star, closing every now and then into nebulae; and there was the oxalis, troop by troop, the dark vertical clefts in the lime-stone choked up

with them, as with heavy snow, and touched with ivy on the edges—ivy as light and lovely as the vine; and ever and anon, a blue gush of violets, and cowslip bells in sunny places; and in the more open ground, the vetch and comfrey, and the wild strawberry, just a blossom or two, all showered amidst the golden softness of deep, warm, amber-coloured moss."

"I came out presently on the edge of the ravine: the solemn murmur of its waters rose suddenly from beneath, mixed with the singing of the thrushes among the pine boughs; and on the opposite side of the valley, walled all along as it was by gray cliffs of limestone, there was a hawk sailing slowly off their brow, touching them nearly with his wings, and with the shadows of the pines flickering upon his plumage from above; but with a fall of a hundred fathoms under his breast, and the curling pools of the green river gliding and glittering dizzily beneath him, their foam globes moving with him as he flew.

"It would be difficult to conceive a scene less dependent upon any other interest than that of its own secluded and serious beauty; but the writer well remembers the sudden blankness and chill which were cast upon it when he endeavoured, in order more strictly to arrive at the sources of its impressiveness, to imagine it, for a moment, a scene in some aboriginal forest of the New Continent. The flowers in an instant lost their light, the river its music; the hills became oppressively desolate; a heaviness in the boughs of the darkened forest showed how much of their former power had been dependent upon a life which was not theirs, how much of the glory of the imperishable, or continually renewed, creation is reflected from things more precious in their memories than it, in its renewing.

"Those ever-springing flowers and ever-flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron wall of Joux and the four square keep of Granson."

"It is as the centralization and protection of this sacred influence that architecture is to be regarded by us with the most serious thought. We may live without her, and worship without her, but

we cannot remember without her. How cold is all history, how lifeless all imagery, compared to that which the living nation writes, and the uncorrupted marble bears ! How many pages of doubtful record might we not often spare, for a few stones left one upon another ! The ambition of the old Babel builders was well directed for this world : there are but two strong conquerors of the forgetfulness of men, Poetry and Architecture ; and the latter in some sort includes the former, and is mightier in its reality : it is well to have, not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled, and their strength wrought, and their eyes beheld, all the days of their life."

"The age of Homer is surrounded with darkness, his very personality with doubt. Not so that of Pericles : and the day is coming when we shall confess, that we have learned more of Greece out of the crumbled fragments of her sculpture than even from her sweet singers or soldier historians. And if indeed there be any profit in our knowledge of the past, or any joy in the thought of being remembered hereafter, which can give strength to present exertion, or patience to present endurance, there are two duties respecting national architecture whose importance it is impossible to overrate: the first, to render the architecture of the day historical ; and the second, to preserve, as the most precious of inheritances, that of past ages."